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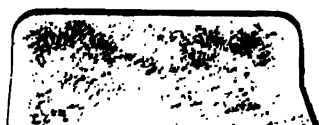
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THE FATE OF FOLLY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY LORD B * * * * *

Author of "MASTERS AND WORKMEN," "NAPLES," "WEALTH
AND LABOUR," "THE FARCE OF LIFE," &c.

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THE FATE OF FOLLY.

CHAPTER I.

A BRIGHT day in spring was drawing to a close, and the sun, dimmed by rising vapours, shone faintly on the tender green of the budding trees, scattered over the high banks of a wild and rocky stream only a few miles from the coast, in one of our northern counties.

Far away in the west, a high cliff rose into the golden clouds, giving promise of a fair country in the upper lands, and a man seated on the stump of an old tree near the water's edge, looked long and wistfully towards it, as if there

lay the better land where he hoped to rest from his labours.

Like many of us, who, whilst dreaming of the future, take no heed of the present till it has become the past, he did not mark the beauty of the scenery amidst which he sat, though both would have delighted to paint the feathery woods and glittering stream as it broke and murmured over its uneven bed beneath a rustic wooden bridge, with the winding path up the opposite bank, where the sun poured a flood of light between the stems of the tall lime trees, on moss, and weed, and bramble.

The man had fished in that stream when a youth, in the service of a family whose noble mansion stood at no great distance; and now, when he had reached his seventieth year, he loved to rest his weary limbs, after a day's wandering, upon its pleasant banks. He had been for many years a soldier; he had followed his young master with his regiment into several of the British colonies, but when the Major was ordered to India, he was compelled to remain in

England, his left hand having been disabled by a wound he had received during a hunting party in North America.

Robin Charlton then became a pedlar, at least he called himself so; though the small wares in which he dealt scarcely gave him a right to the title. His whole stock-in-trade was contained in a large basket, covered with a coarse cloth, and in a pack suspended over his shoulders by a cord, well wrapped round with many coloured rags. Ballads and gingerbread, coarse sugar-plums, pins and needles, tape, thread and twine, were the articles which he carried round the country to secluded villages, lonely farms, and solitary cottages, where Robin was as welcome for the news he brought as for his merchandize.

He was, in fact, a living country chronicle of events which had never found their way to the press. He had heard and seen far more than he judged it expedient to relate, and he knew far more of human nature than men, who, living in cities, associate only with a class, and never look beneath the surface of society.

Alone under the canopy of heaven during the last six years of his life, though he had read only the Bible and the old border ballads he carried about for sale, he had held deep commune with his own soul, and the great story of creation, whose pages were in every season spread out around him. He seldom spoke but of common things, yet he had many thoughts he found no words to utter.

A tall and stalwart man in his youth, he was still strong, though somewhat bent by age and the burdens he had carried; his broad honest face was ruddy and healthy, though his long thin locks and stubble beard were white as snow. Beneath his old and greasy hat he wore a grey Welsh wig, an article between a peruke, a night-cap, and an old stocking. His clothes were drab-coloured, and patched, till nothing of the original stuff remained visible; his shoes had wooden soles, and his dark leather breeches met a pair of coarse, knit, worsted stockings at the knee. A strong oak cudgel supported his crossed hands, on which his chin was rested.

Suddenly the old man was aroused by the sound of a horse coming rapidly down the road behind him, towards the stream. There was a ford near the spot where he sat; the narrow wooden bridge was only for foot passengers, and carriages and horsemen had to pass through the water a little distance above it.

The rider was a gentleman about five and thirty, well dressed, according to the fashion of the day. His person was slender and his face pale; not handsome, and not ill-looking. The nose was long and thin, the mouth well formed, though the lips were almost invisible when closed. Of the eyes it was impossible to judge, for he wore spectacles so close to them, that to persons who saw him frequently, they appeared a part of himself, and they would scarcely have recognised him without them. There was a lightness and grace in his whole figure, and he sat his horse well.

Robin had long known him, and it appeared that the gentleman also recognised the pedlar, for he drew up his horse and addressed him.

There is not more diversity in human faces than in human voices. The voice of Mr. Dillon was even thinner than his person; it did not come from his chest, but from his throat, it was high and sharp, yet it was an insinuating voice, even when addressing the poor old pedlar, whom few men in his station would have deigned to converse with, for Mr. Dillon was the cousin of a baronet, and the administrator of his large estates.

He had passed through the classes at Eton, and went to college with the reputation of being the best cricket player, and the most amusing fellow of his year. As time went on, he became more remarkable for dissipation, and his skill in games of chance, than for study. He played high, and he generally played successfully, yet still he left college in debt. He had dissipated so much of his slender paternal inheritance, that he was obliged to give up the idea of studying for the bar, and to content himself by becoming an attorney.

In pursuit of this profession he was settled at

the little town of Walton, only a few miles from the spot where he met, that evening, with Robin Charlton, and by the management of his cousin, Sir Charles Saville's estates, he enjoyed an ample income.

"Well, Robin, my fellow," he said, "is there any news at Cleve Court, since I have been in London?"

He dropped half-a-crown into the hat which the pedlar had doffed as he respectfully arose at his approach.

"You want to know, sir, I suppose, if there is any news of the baronet's lost heir?" answered the old man, with a grave and searching look.

"It would be madness to expect such a thing," was the quick reply of the lawyer.

"I cannot say that people are exactly agreed upon that point," responded Robin drily. "Is the baronet expected home from the continent soon, sir? I think he is so up in years now, that the ladies can hardly flatter him even in Paris, so much as they used to do, when I was there with him and the Major, forty years ago."

"He spends more money now than he did then to please them," said Dillon, sharply.

"He was a vain, foolish youth," answered the pedlar, "and he is not much wiser in his old age, from all I can see; but he always spent his money freely, only it is a pity he has not given a little of it to his brother, the Major, for he is poor enough; I wish the baronet had been at home, that they might have been reconciled, before death divides them for ever, for I am afraid Major Saville's daughter will be very ill provided for."

"So much the worse," answered Dillon, "for her father cannot live many hours."

"Have you heard that already?" inquired the old man drily.

"Yes," said the lawyer; "he has sent for me, and I am now on my way thither."

"He was always very fond of you, Mr. Clement, when you were a boy," returned the pedlar. "He has seen sorrowful days since then, but he is a good man, and the poor have never wanted a shilling, when he had one to

spare. He is going fast where he will meet his reward."

To this Mr. Clement Dillon made no reply, but slightly saluting the old man, he rode off at a rapid pace. Robin then arose and pursued his way across the fields. He reached the town of Olten a little after sunset.

Olten was, in fact, a small city, where a wealthy bishop and well paid dean and canons, and minor canons, kept up the state of the aristocratical Anglican Church, as is fitting and seemly, in an aristocratic and Christian country, in the nineteenth century. These great church dignitaries lived in a most exclusive circle of country society. Active clergy, who were slenderly endowed, were rarely admitted into their select parties, and when they dined with the bishop, the luxury of napkins was not extended to the lower end of the table where they sat. Though many of this aristocratic society, were proud to enjoy the hospitality of the wealthy baronet, Sir Charles Saville, of Cleve Court, they paid not the smallest attention to his

younger brother the Major, when he lay dangerously ill in a small lodging in Olten. They knew that he had long been at variance with his brother, and though very poor, he was too noble minded to bend or cringe before the supremacy of place, or money, even when dignified by the robes of a state church. Having entered the army early, he had served long in every quarter of the globe. His small inheritance as a younger brother had been nearly all expended to purchase his promotion, but even when finally put upon half-pay, his little income sufficed for the simple wants of himself, and his only daughter Emma.

This girl had been his constant companion, after the early death of his young wife, and his only relaxation for many years had been afforded by her education. In Upper Canada, at the Cape of Good Hope, and in the wildest parts of India, he had himself supplied to her the want of governess and masters; and though in fashionable accomplishments she was necessarily inferior to many of her sex, she had a strength

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of mind, and a facility in adapting herself to circumstances, which are never found in women whose training has been received in a boarding school.

Major Saville's only sorrow, when he returned to end his days in his own country, was caused by the long estrangement which had subsisted between himself and his eldest brother. All his overtures for a reconciliation had been uniformly rejected.

They had in youth been both in love with the same woman, the daughter of a poor half-pay lieutenant in the navy. She had refused to become the mistress of the wealthy baronet, but gave her hand and her heart to his younger brother, the poor soldier.

This insult was one not to be forgiven by a vain man. Not even his own marriage, nor the birth of his heir, nor the death of his sister-in-law seven years afterwards, when little Emma was born, could soften this proud man's heart. From time to time the Major had come into his old neighbourhood, and his nephew Frank had

often been brought by Robin Charlton to his uncle; yet though this nephew had met with a premature death, and the baronet was left without an heir, the old feud between the brothers still subsisted.

The proud Baronet was enjoying the dissipations of Paris, whilst the Major lay at the point of death, and his daughter Emma watched alone at his bed side.

No language could picture the despair of the desolate young creature, as she gazed with agony and terror on the altered face of her father, where the shadows of approaching death were slowly gathering, giving a strange and awful gloom to every feature. .

Suddenly, in the midst of the freshness and joyfulness of happy youth, an abyss of gloom and desolation had opened before her. Her father's illness had been short; and full of hope, she had not anticipated danger, till suddenly, that day, she had been told, that his recovery was impossible. The father, who had been her play fellow, her companion, and her friend,

during the whole course of her life, from whom she had never been divided for a day; he, whom she adored with her whole soul, whose life seemed a part of her own being—he must be taken away from her, for ever. So they told her; and yet, when he faintly smiled, or pressed her hand, or murmured words of affection, she hoped that he might yet be saved, and dried her tears, and hung over him in breathless silence, a prey to the keenest anguish of suspense.

The room in which the sick man lay, was in a small house in the suburbs of the city, which he had taken on his arrival from India, a few months before. It was a little parlour on the ground floor, adjoining the kitchen and Emma's bed room, for his illness had attacked him so suddenly that it had been impossible to remove him up stairs. A bed, therefore, had been brought there, and placed amongst his books, by the study of which he had through life prepared his soul for that better world to which he was fast approaching.

The good man's mind was perfectly clear, and

had he not felt anxiety for the future destiny of his child, he would have been contented to die.

“Poor Emma, I am going to leave thee,” he murmured once, after gazing at her, long and anxiously; “what will become of thee, my child, when I am gone?”

Tears were her only reply, and there was a long silence in the chamber of death.

“The boy will be a heavy charge to you, when you are left alone,” resumed Major Saville, at length; “but I know you will never desert him—you will see justice done him, though I shall not. I cannot regret that you adopted him, for though rashly, it was nobly done, my child, like yourself. Had his father lived it might have been better, both for his child and you.”

Emma wept, but made no reply.

“Heaven bless, and watch over you, my child, when I am gone!” said her father, after a long silence; “I know your noble character—I know your wish is ever to do right: but your nature is ardent and impetuous; and I fear, my darling,

lest you may unconsciously bring heavy misfortunes on yourself."

"Oh, father!" replied the weeping girl, "I will strive to be prudent; I will put a curb upon my feelings; I will endeavour to be all you wish; but, pardon me; oh, pardon all the pain and trouble I have given you by my headstrong ways."

"No, Emma! never headstrong," answered her father, "your errors have only been those of too warm a heart, and I have nothing to forgive. But, beware, my child, for the future, whom you love; for with your love your very existence will be involved. But promise me this, Emma—your heart once given—your love acknowledged and returned, let no false pride—no jealousy—no suspicions, induce you to desert the object of your choice, and in resentment or desperation, to encourage the addresses of another man who is indifferent to you."

"Never, father! I will never give my hand without my heart! I would sooner die."

"If ever temptation should occur, my child," rejoined Major Saville, "pause, and remember

me. I trust you may never be exposed to such a trial, and it has been my aim through life, to teach you to command yourself. But I shall leave you, when you have most need of me, my child; pray for help, Emma, when I am gone; pray, and you will be guided aright."

Suddenly there was a clatter of horse's feet in the street, and a hasty rapping at the street door. Even the sick man heard these sounds, and looked up anxiously, when quick footsteps crossed the kitchen, and Mr. Dillon entered the parlour unannounced.

The last rays of the setting sun at that moment shed a rich golden light, on the tall though slender figure of Emma Saville, as she stood at her father's bedside, supporting his pillow, so that he might look once more upon the evening sky; and her beauty failed not to attract the admiration of Dillon, who till he saw her thus, under the influence of deep feeling, had scarcely honoured her by a glance.

But even in her sorrow, she treated him with the same cold manner, she had always done,

and after she had proudly returned his salutation, she remained perfectly silent.

But Major Saville, on the contrary, eagerly held out his hand to his cousin. "I am glad you have come," he said; "I have only a little while to tarry in this world, and I have much to say to you."

"Had not Emma better leave us alone, my dear sir?" asked Dillon, in the softest tone, to which he could subdue his voice.

The girl looked at him, with a glance of fire. She did not utter a syllable, but she pressed her father's hand convulsively, and he understood the silent language.

"No, Clement," he said, "she shall not leave me now? Before long, we must part eternally."

With unutterable love and despair, the girl kept her large eyes fixed on her father's face, as he uttered these words, but she neither wept, nor spoke. She could have given her life to save his, yet there she stood, motionless and cold, as if all feeling had forsaken her. She was even

forgetful of Dillon's presence, till startled by the tones of his voice.

Major Saville, who understood little of business, an ignorance which proves the ruin of many worthy men, had always entertained a high opinion of his cousin's judgment and abilities, and owing to his long absence from England, he had heard little of his vices. He was the only relative, who had not deserted him in his poverty, and he was grateful to him for the obliging attention he never failed to pay him; above all for the trouble he had taken, in managing his little money matters for him, without ever making any charge, or accepting any remuneration.

But Emma had never shared her father's liking for their relative. From a child she disliked him; his very presence was unpleasant to her, as she grew older. She could not bear to feel the glare of his spectacles fixed upon her, and all his little presents, and all his flattery, had never won her confidence. She intuitively mistrusted him, and with that wonderful tact, which seems given to some women, as a weapon

of defence, she even, before she went to India, understood much of her cousin's character, which her father never suspected.

Easy, obliging, and witty, Dillon was, when he wished to be so, a most agreeable companion, but Emma knew that he could also be sarcastic and malicious, and it was painful to her that he should stand beside her father's death bed.

But such a feeling could not be uttered there, and she listened silently, whilst he assured Major Saville of his gratitude, for the trust he had reposed in him, by naming him one of the executors of his will. She heard him profess to the dying man, that he would hold all his wishes sacred, and endeavour to the utmost of his power, to fulfil them.

"Immediately after my decease," rejoined the Major, "you must take charge of all the papers in that cabinet. Emma, my child, bring me the key, I will give it to Mr. Dillon now. He will soon have need of it."

"Oh, father, not yet, not yet," sobbed the

heart-broken girl, and hiding her face in her hands, she sunk down on her knees beside the bed, and wept as if her heart would break.

"My child, my own dear Emma, I cannot bear to see you thus," said the dying man, whilst his own features were, for the first time, convulsed by the grief he had long struggled to conceal.

A silence of some minutes' duration was first broken by Mr. Dillon, who softly reminded Major Saville that he had not yet received the key of the cabinet. Emma arose, and in obedience to a sign from her father, placed it in the lawyer's hand. He well understood, from her cold and haughty manner, how reluctantly she did so. He accepted it, however, with a smile, though thinking the while that a day would come when he should take full vengeance for her impertinence.

Yet to the charge of this man, should Sir Charles Saville refuse to be her guardian, the Major had confided the property of his orphan

daughter, and he parted from him that evening with a calm conviction that he could not have placed her under the protection of a more sincere, zealous, and trustworthy man.

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CHAPTER II.

AFTER Dillon's departure, the sick man sunk into a dull sleep, which was first interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Thornton, an old curate, who had frequently come to read to the invalid since he had been confined to his bed. He was a tall, thin old man, with a venerable countenance and stooping gait, whose placid manner bespoke the tranquillity of a truly pious heart. His presence inspired respect, and with silent reverence Emma took his hand and led him to her father's bed.

She then glided softly away, and left them

alone together, to hold that high and holy communion which could best prepare the departing spirit to enter the world that is to come.

Quickly attiring herself for a walk, she took Harry, her little ward, by the hand, and hastened with all speed in quest of a medicine which had been prescribed for her father. When she returned towards her home, the last rays of the setting sun had sunk beneath the horizon, and the tall church spire arose in purple shadow against the western sky. The old trees in the grave-yard stood like mourners around its walls, fitfully waving their dark arms over the grass-grown mounds, with a dull moan of lamentation as the night wind stirred their leaves. Few people were abroad, except the labourers returning from the fields, and as Emma glided rapidly on with her little companion, all who met them turned to watch for a brief space the noble figure of the sorrowful lady, and the happy playful creature who gamboled at her side.

Even from afar little Harry spied Robin Charlton sitting on a stone at their house door,

and ran gaily off to welcome him. The old man arose respectfully at their approach, and Emma returned his salutation with gentle kindness, for she had known him from her earliest infancy.

"You look tired, Robin. Have you walked far to-day?" she said, whilst little Harry peeped with longing eyes under the cover of the old man's basket.

"I've just come to ask after the master, Miss Saville," he returned, as he stood leaning on his thick-headed oaken stick, and looking anxiously in her mournful face; "I see you have been for medicine, so I hope he may mend yet."

"Come in, Robin," was her reply, and the old man followed her as she entered.

She then held brief parley with him as to her father's state, and though she said it was impossible he could see his old master that night, she assigned him a bed in one of the garrets, and promised to admit him to the sick man's bedside on the morrow. Robin was evidently disappointed, but as the clergyman was still with

Major Saville, he was obliged to submit to this arrangement, and soon retired to rest.

When Mr. Thornton departed, he did not wish his friend farewell, for at his earnest desire, he had promised to return to him on the morrow.

Major Saville then insisted that his daughter should take some repose. He felt better, he said; she had not been in bed for the three preceding nights, and he would ring his little hand bell should he require her assistance.

It was vain to oppose him, and Emma left him, though unwillingly, after he had kissed and blessed her; but she did not undress, when she lay down on her little bed in an adjoining room, being fully determined to remain awake during the whole night. But her strong will could not master the weakness of nature, and completely exhausted by long watching, her head no sooner rested on her pillow, than she slept that dead and dreamless sleep, which often follows great sorrow, as if to strengthen the afflicted to support the anguish which is yet to come.

Suddenly, in the dead of the night, she started up, with a confused sensation of neglected duty and impending misfortune. At first, unconscious where she was, she gazed bewildered around her, but a low murmur of voices in her father's room, and a faint gleam of light through the half-open door leading to it, soon made her aware of her mournful position, though she still lay, as it were unconsciously, listening to the soft tones of Major Saville's voice, and the louder words of another man, who replied to him.

A strange story fell upon her ear; broken parts of a terrible narrative seemed to become entangled in her brain, like the confused images of delirium, and then she slept again.

Five minutes afterwards she was aroused and alarmed by the calls of some one in her father's room; she heard her own name more than once repeated, and when she started up, she knew not whether she had dreamt, or had actually heard a story from the lips of the living, of which even the confused remembrance made her shudder.

She passed hastily into Major Saville's room. He was still lying on the bed where she had left him, but fearfully changed. Though she neither uttered an exclamation, nor shed a tear, as she sprang forward towards him, the horror of that moment remained for ever on her memory, as if branded on her soul. Not only were the features of her beloved parent overclouded by the shadow of death, but the convulsions of mental agony had given them a strange and wild expression, so different from the peaceful calm of his face when she left him, that she scarcely recognised the parent she adored. With distended and eager eyes he held out his hands towards her; but of speech he was no longer capable.

He pointed anxiously to the cabinet, of which he had given the key to Dillon, and amongst many inarticulate sounds, the words, "will—burn," were alone to be understood.

"Have you got the key of that cupboard, Miss Emma?" asked the same voice which she had heard mingling with her sleep, and with an amazement bordering on delirium, she saw

the figure of the old pedlar, Robin Charlton, appear from behind the curtain, on the opposite side of the bed.

Could the terrible story she had believed a dream, be a truth, and a reality? was the thought which instantly rushed upon the girl's mind even at that solemn moment when her father lay expiring before her.

"Miss Saville, have you the key?" demanded Robin, eagerly repeating the question. "The Major wants to burn his will—and he must burn it, or you will be a lost young woman, my dear young lady. Have you the key, or can you get it?"

The sick man made a gesture of impatience. "Too late—too late," were the words they understood him to say, as his head sunk upon his daughter's shoulder, who stood with her arms around him, whilst her tears fell fast.

"Mr. Dillon has the key; my father gave it him last night," she said quickly.

"Then there is nothing to be done but to break open the lock," answered Robin impetu-

ously; and Major Saville made a feeble movement, which showed that he understood, and approved of the proposal.

The pedlar required no further encouragement, and without uttering another word, he hastened with long strides into the kitchen. He quickly returned with a hammer and an old iron skewer, and with these rough tools he contrived to burst open the door of the cabinet in less than a minute.

No sooner was this accomplished than the dying man, as by a supernatural effort, sat erect in the bed, and eagerly pointed to a sealed packet which lay on the lowest shelf.

Robin understood him, and snatching it up, eagerly placed it in the hands of his old master.

With trembling fingers, which death had already frozen, Major Saville tore off the sealed cover, and took out the various papers it contained. One small parcel he thrust into the pedlar's hand: "Keep that," he said, "till my child is twenty-one."

Robin looked at the papers; he understood at

once their importance, and hastily concealed them in his breast pocket, whilst the Major signed for him to hold the candle near. Then with a smile of inexpressible pleasure, the dying man held the will, which appointed Dillon his executor, in the flames.

Slowly the fire curled round the edges of the document, which it seemed unwilling to consume; it flickered and died out, when the hand which held it sunk paralyzed on the bed.

"My child—my poor child!" burst from the lips of Major Saville, and with a faint cry he fell back dead.

The rigid fingers of the corpse, as they rested on the sheets, still grasped the will, which the dying father had vainly endeavoured to destroy. The flame had only consumed a narrow strip of blank margin, but the whole of the written portion of the document remained entire.

Overpowered by the spectacle of her father's death, Emma was unconscious of the extent of the double calamity which had befallen her, and sat perfectly stupified by her sorrow.

Old Mary, the only servant in the house, had sat up, expecting her master's death, and was not the least surprised when Robin called her to lay out the corpse. She had served the Major twenty years, and loved him as much as she was capable of loving anything; yet, strange to say, she felt a kind of awful pleasure in preparing his body for the grave. She had performed the task so often when with the regiment, that it had lost by custom all its horror and its sanctity. By a sad aberration of an uncultured mind, there was more of vanity than of sorrow in the old woman's heart, as she that night fulfilled her sad duty.

She expressed no astonishment when she saw the cabinet broken open; nor did she utter a syllable when Robin lifted the will from the hand of the dead, folded and replaced it in the torn cover, and laid it on the same shelf from whence he had taken it only a few minutes before. The old woman, having been all night on the watch, had heard and seen more than any one suspected: and it was fortunate for the

pedlar that before he called her from the kitchen he had not yielded to the momentary temptation of fulfilling Major Saville's wishes, by completing the destruction of the will.

But Robin Charlton, though a poor pedlar, was an honest man; honest from his desire to do the will of God, and his conviction, that he was responsible to his Creator, not only for his secret acts but for his hidden thoughts.

An instant's reflection had convinced him, that to destroy Major Saville's will, after his decease, would be an act, not only punishable by law, but in itself a crime, and he decided to replace the paper where he had found it. He felt, with awe, that the hand of death itself had interposed to prevent its destruction, and believing firmly in the interference of Providence to direct the fortunes of mankind, he doubted not that it was the will of Heaven for the directions the document contained to be carried into effect.

When he had closed the cabinet the old man's next care was for the desolate orphan. He spoke kindly to her, in his plain rough way; but she

seemed not to understand his words, though she offered no resistance, when old Mary led her away to the bed she had so recently quitted.

The grey light of morning already shone into the chamber of death, and the birds flew twittering from the eaves of the roof.

The corpse was laid out. Old Mary offered Robin a glass of her deceased master's brandy, with which she had refreshed herself after the task was done, but the pedlar declined it.

"It will keep the fog from your stomach this damp morning," she said, "for I suppose you mean to be going, now there is nothing more to be done, and I should be glad to get to bed after such a hard night's work. There is nothing so wearisome as a death in a house."

"I won't detain you a minute longer, Mistress Molly," was Robin's reply, as he threw the cord of his basket over his shoulder, and took his thick crab stick in his hand. "I shall just call on Mr. Thornton, and send him up here the first thing. He will be able to write letters, and to order everything in a proper way for the poor

desolate young creature that has neither father nor mother left."

"You might as well spare yourself the trouble, and leave the dead in peace for four and twenty hours," answered the old woman. "I shall have enough to do, putting the house in order, for one day, without being bothered with strangers poking their noses into every corner, and ordering me about as if I was their servant."

The pedlar made no reply. He knew many sides of human nature, and he knew, that even with those who call themselves honest, there is no sin so common, and no peculation so tempting, as the plunder of the dead. But he knew, also, that old Mary's depredations would not be considerable, so he thought remonstrance needless; and with a hasty salutation left the house.

He was soon beyond the town, and then, turning off from the high road, he trudged steadily on, through the grey morning mist, across the low lying meadows which divided the city of Olten from the village, where Mr. Thornton had been for forty years the curate.

The distance was rather more than a mile, and as the pedlar crossed the church-yard, and approached the old brick house where he resided, the sun was just appearing, like a streak of fire above the line of low hills which bounded the distant horizon.

Bright small clouds, which covered the vault of heaven, each single, and yet all in one harmonious union, like the breaking waves of a wide ocean, caught a red glory from the coming planet, the highest first, and as the sun arose the rays spread wider and paler, till the whole sky was golden, though dull grey shades still lay upon the earth.

Slowly, as if borne along by the soft airs of morning, the light glided down the sides of the hills into the valley, and the mists, which there hung over the meadows, melted into transparency. The rays of the sun then pierced the veil, and the winding river glittered broadly around a motionless ship, whose pendant sails and cords, and slender spars, were all reflected in the bright mirror of the silent stream.

With a feeling of intense devotion old Robin watched the glorious spectacle, more beautiful to him than all the religious pageantries which human art has ever invented. Not Nature only, but Nature's God was present at that solemn hour to the soul of this lonely, untutored wayfarer, and he felt with exultation that earth is the pathway of the just to heaven, however humble and however poor.

When Robin entered the dwelling of the curate, he found that even at that early hour his sister was already astir, and with the assistance of a little village maiden, who was her only servant, she was busy in preparing the morning's repast for the family, though her brother had not left his room.

The pedlar told Miss Thornton as briefly as possible that Major Saville had died during the night, and that he had called to request that either she or her brother would go up to the poor young lady, who stood greatly in need of their friendly assistance.

Robin, knowing that if he tarried he should

have a thousand questions put to him by the worthy spinster, declined the breakfast she offered him. He begged her to lose no time in sending her brother to Miss Saville, and adding that he had himself many miles to walk in another direction that day, he hastily wished her good morning, and set off on his journey at a rapid pace.

CHAPTER III.

AN hour after Robin had spoken with Miss Thornton, her brother, the curate, entered the house of his deceased friend. To his amazement, he found Miss Saville seated alone in the little parlour. She was dressed in black, and her face was very pale, as she leaned her head back against the wall, in such deep thought, that she appeared unconscious of all around her.

A little boy, about six years old, with large black eyes, and a profusion of flaxen ringlets clustering round his beautiful upturned head, stood leaning on her knees, gazing inquiringly on her sorrowful face.

Emma had ceased to weep, but there was a solemn depth in her affliction which was too stern and too profound for tears. She was endeavouring to consider what painful duty she had next to perform, now the task of nursing her beloved father was at an end.

When Mr. Thornton entered the room, she arose with an unmoved countenance, and held out her hand to him.

"I am glad you are come, sir," she said, in an almost inaudible voice, which told far more than any words could have done how much she had suffered. "Orders must be given about the funeral, and I do not understand these things. I am grateful, deeply grateful, that you have not forgotten me in my great need."

"Surely you could not suppose that I would desert the child of my old friend in her affliction," answered the worthy curate, whilst his eyes filled with tears; "no, my poor child, you must have no further anxiety, but leave me to order everything. I will write to Mr. Dillon immediately; for I suppose you know that he

is the executor of your father's will and your guardian?"

"I know it; though would to heaven it had been otherwise!" replied the girl, whilst an expression of terror and anxiety replaced the former leaden dullness of her eyes.

"Why should you object to him, my child?" said Thornton, mildly. "Your uncle, Sir Charles Saville, would, no doubt, be the fittest protector for you, if he will accept the charge; for your father told me he had named him before Mr. Dillon in his will; but the brothers were so long estranged, that there is little probability of his doing so. After your uncle, Mr. Dillon is your next of kin. He is a man of talent, who understands affairs, and he has always shown himself very friendly towards you and your father.

"He must be sent for, then, I suppose," was Emma's only reply, and her hands trembled as she folded and refolded a piece of paper on the table, for though her words were calm, her heart throbbed violently, when the broken tale which had mingled with her dream the preceding night,

recurred to her mind, and the last action, and the last words of her dying father, seemed like a fearful augury of evil to come.

Good, simple hearted Mr. Thornton, who had gone peacefully through life, without feeling strong passions, or witnessing their activity in others, had not the slightest suspicion of the bitter hate which the young girl entertained for her specious cousin, or the horror she felt at the idea of being subjected to the authority of a man whom she not only disliked, but mistrusted.

Emma arose in silence, placed an open writing desk before the curate, and then without further opposition she watched him write and fold, and seal the letter, on which, she believed, her future destiny depended. She knew that all delays were ruin; her father's will was in the cabinet; whatever motive might have impelled him to destroy it, the document was, she well knew, in perfect preservation, and its behests must be obeyed.

She anxiously desired to ask from Robin Charlton, an explanation of the mystery, and

had been much surprised and disappointed when she learnt from Mary, that the pedlar had departed without leaving any message for her, or saying when he would return. Yet she shrunk from relating to Mr. Thornton, the events of the past night, for though she respected her father's old and worthy friend, she had no reliance on his judgment, and was perfectly aware that she could not count on his feeling sympathy with anything but religious resignation and submission.

Even her father had so frequently chided her for her ardent and enthusiastic nature, that young as she was, she had already learnt to struggle with her own feelings in secrecy and silence. Without a mother to share the confidence of her truly woman's heart, trained by her father, with no female friend or confidant, she had long been habituated to be reserved in the common intercourse of life, with persons from whom she expected no affection; and now that she felt entirely alone, a sorrowful quiet sternness, strange at her early years, seemed to prepare her for the heartless struggle with life,

she believed she had henceforth to wage. Youth is very apt to suppose, that its existing position, and the frame of mind attending on it, are to remain for ever the same.


But though Emma Saville had strong feelings and affections, which imagination had fostered in seclusion, her intellect was clear and highly cultivated, and her father's narrow income had, happily for herself, obliged her to take an active part in all the common concerns of life.

When Mr. Thornton's letter was written and sent, she at once began to converse with him concerning the sad details connected with her father's decease, and the old man was surprised to find that she had foreseen and prepared herself for all the difficulties of her position. She knew that immediately after the funeral, the house she occupied must be vacated, and the property it contained put up to sale. Though small, it was too expensive for her to continue it, and she had determined, if possible, at once to quit Olten, where no one had shown either her or her father, the slightest friendly attention.

“ Had I not made a promise to my father, Mr. Thornton,” added Miss Saville, “ I should have asked you and your sister to receive me and my little ward as boarders, but—”

“ We must now be guided by Mr. Dillon,” returned the curate, kindly taking her hand in his. “ If he approves of your plan, Martha, I know, will gladly welcome you, and I shall be happy to endeavour to supply your father’s place.”

The old gentleman then went on to dilate on the comforts she would find under his roof, without once remembering what a dismal and dreary home such a secluded and rustic abode would be for a young and ardent girl, who during the greatest part of her life had been accustomed to foreign travel, and the most highly enlightened and intellectual society. And even Emma forgot, at the time, that her former habits might, when her grief had abated, make the society of the curate’s maiden sister irksome to her, and that a dependent position in the house of those from whom she greatly differed, might prove not only annoying, but insupportable.



Mr. Thornton insisted on remaining with Miss Saville the whole of that day, as no answer could be received from Mr. Dillon before the evening; but to their great surprise, a little after the hour of noon, the lawyer walked into the little room where they were sitting.

“Alarmed,” he said, “by the appearance of Major Saville the day before, he had passed the night in the town, and though he had not received the curate’s letter, he had heard by accident of his cousin’s decease, and was come, as the only relative of Miss Saville then in the neighbourhood, to offer her all the assistance in his power.”

A great deal in the same style was very kindly and blandly said, and Emma could not refuse to give her hand to her cousin when he offered his; but though her lips moved, her thanks were inaudible, and Mr. Thornton thought it necessary to break the silence which ensued.

In a few words he informed Mr. Dillon that, having been told by his deceased friend that his

cousin was named his executor and the guardian of his daughter, he had written to request his presence at the opening of the will.

"We will not now speak of affairs," answered the lawyer, in a soft nasal whine. "To read Major Saville's will would be distressing to Miss Emma; after the funeral will no doubt be better."

"Let there be no delay on my account, I beg," said the girl quietly but firmly; "nothing can pain me after what has passed."

Dillon turned suddenly at these words, and surveyed his young cousin with great amazement and curiosity, but she met the scrutiny as calmly as if she had not uttered a syllable.

"Does Miss Saville mean that we should go through this sad business in her presence?" he said. "Surely that would be giving her unnecessary pain—and it is not usual. I shall be glad to be her representative in this case, as in all others which she will trust to my direction."

"I thank you," replied the girl, without turn-

ing her quiet eyes from his face; "of what is usual I know nothing, but as I have listened to my father's voice whilst living, I cannot delegate to another the duty of hearing his last written injunctions. I shall remain if you will have the goodness to read the will."

Mr. Dillon made no reply; he arranged his spectacles, and then took out a highly-scented pocket handkerchief and passed it across his face. He had a reason for hesitating.

"My dear sir," he then said, arising and turning to the curate, "you are probably aware that this important document is in a cabinet in the room of the deceased. Perhaps you will take this key, which the poor Major gave me yesterday, or would you rather that I should go myself, though I confess I should be glad if you—"

"It is unnecessary for you to enter the chamber of the dead, if it so unpleasant to you," said Emma, arising from her seat, "the cabinet is open. My father's will is on the lowest shelf, and I will bring it to you without more delay."

Again Mr. Dillon looked at her with amazement, for she had hitherto always remained so silent in his presence, that he had regarded her only as a weak and timid girl. His face became as red as scarlet, for she made him ashamed of the reluctance he had betrayed to enter the presence of her father's corpse, and hastily arising he declined her proposal, and begged Mr. Thornton to precede him into the adjoining room.

Emma neither spoke nor moved as they departed, but she remained, during their absence, with her eyes fixed anxiously on the door which alone divided her from the dead. She could hear their footsteps as they passed the bier, where her father's body lay. She heard Mr. Dillon's exclamations of astonishment when he found that the cabinet was broken open, and the wonder expressed both by the lawyer and Mr. Thornton, when they found the seals of the cover, which contained the will of the deceased, broken and torn off, and the will itself singed, discoloured, and partly burnt. She then plainly

distinguished a rustling amongst the other papers in the cabinet, as if further search was made, and a few low words were spoken; after this the rustling again commenced, but apparently without the object sought for being discovered.

Emma remembered the small packet which her father had committed to the care of Robin Charlton, and though she was ignorant of its contents, she rejoiced that it was out of the reach of Dillon's prying eyes.


Though the lawyer endeavoured to appear perfectly at his ease whilst in company with Mr. Thornton, and performed the task which duty imposed upon him; he felt as if a chilling atmosphere hung around the dead, and eager to escape from the proximity of the corpse, he hastily closed the cabinet, after taking from it the will and a bundle of other papers. He determined to return after the funeral, and make a closer and more deliberate investigation of the various documents which the deceased had committed to his care. He told Mr. Thornton that he had

no doubt that many of them were of little importance, and had better be committed to the flames.

When the gentlemen re-entered the outer room, they found Miss Saville awaiting them there.

“You can probably inform us,” he said, addressing her, as he drew a seat near the table, and spread out the papers before him; “you can no doubt explain how it happens that your father’s cabinet has been broken open, since he yesterday confided the key of it to me; and you will be able, no doubt, to explain who has had the audacity to attempt the destruction of the testament which I hold in my hand, and to which fire has evidently been applied?”

Though Dillon’s words conveyed no menace, there was a cutting severity in their sarcastic tone which would have alarmed many, but Emma, prepared for his displeasure and curiosity, was not to be disturbed by his insinuations or implied reproofs, and with perfect tranquillity she replied :



“For what was done by my father’s commands during his life, I believe no one is answerable to you or any man, Mr. Dillon.”

“But was all this done in your father’s life time, and by his commands?” retorted the lawyer in a soft sly voice. “I suppose that remains to be proved, my dear cousin, and if there has been any attempt made subsequently to destroy his will illegally, steps must be taken—”

“There is no ground for such suspicions,” returned the girl, interrupting him with a slight smile of contempt. “You and Mr. Thornton are the only persons who have entered this house since my father’s decease, which occurred an hour before dawn. A short time previously, by his own desire, the cabinet was broken open, and he commanded his will to be given him, which he attempted to destroy. But though he held it to the flame of a candle, he expired before it was consumed. It was then replaced where it formerly lay.”

“And you did all this by your father’s desire,

Miss Saville?" demanded Dillon, quietly unfolding the will as he spoke.

"No," answered the girl haughtily; "the hands of another executed his wishes, and a witness was present at my father's death, who can give testimony to the truth of all I have related. But allow me to add that I am not accustomed to have my word disputed, nor am I aware by what right you presume to question me thus narrowly. My father's will is entire; his wish to destroy it can be no concern of yours."

"My dear cousin," replied the lawyer, in a deprecating voice, "you must be convinced that my only motive for enquiring into circumstances so extraordinary can be your interest. But if you are satisfied of the truth of what you have related, of course I am the same. Yet you have not mentioned the name of the person who was so opportunely here in the middle of the night, to obey Major Saville's wishes, when evidently his mind must have been wandering. It is quite plain

that no woman could have broken open that cabinet."

"You are right," answered Emma, quietly; "but it can be of little consequence who did it, since I was present, and the will is not destroyed."

Dillon fixed a searching look on Miss Saville, whose prompt and calm replies even more and more astonished him. He could have told her that it was not only about the will that he was anxious, and that, trifling as she appeared to consider them, the events of the night might be not only of great importance to her, but to him likewise. But prudence forbade such disclosures on his part, and she looked so unconscious of all but the evident circumstances of the case, that afraid of appearing too much interested in the affair, he forbore to make any further observations; and with the calm demeanour of a man of business, proceeded without further delay with the task he had undertaken.

The will of Major Saville was very short, executed strictly according to legal forms, and had

received very small injury from the flame of the candle. It devised the whole property of the deceased, consisting of two thousand pounds in the Three per cents., one thousand pounds in the bonds of a North American state, and four hundred pounds in his banker's hands, with fifty pounds in the house, and all the personal property it contained, to his executor, Sir Charles Saville, of Cleve Court, for the sole use of his beloved daughter, Emma, and her heirs for ever, whom he likewise appointed the guardian of his child; but should his brother, in consequence of their long estrangement, or any other cause, refuse to act under his will, he then appointed his cousin, Clement Dillon, sole guardian and trustee, till Emma Saville should attain the age of twenty-one years. A proviso was made, that she should after the age of eighteen be allowed the free disposal of the whole interest of her property, and entire freedom to choose her place of residence. If she married before the age of twenty-one, the three thousand pounds were to be settled on herself and her children.

Emma, though already aware of the contents of her father's will, listened with profound awe to this last proof of the parental love and care of which she was for ever deprived. But no tears dimmed her eyes; she kept them fixed on Dillon's face whilst he read, and too many thoughts thronged on her mind as his words fell upon her ears for her to weep.

At the commencement Dillon was, as we have said, calm and indifferent; but suddenly the whole expression of his countenance changed, his mouth was compressed, and though his eyes were half hid by his spectacles, she saw that they were eager and distended. When he pronounced the name of Sir Charles Saville as sole guardian and trustee, his face became livid as a corpse; she saw that he glanced rapidly down the page, and then became more calm; he even smiled as he proceeded to read, that in case of the baronet's refusing to act, Emma was to be under his sole guardianship.

"There can be no doubt that Sir Charles will not accept the trust," he added, when he had

come to the end of the paper, and had given it to Mr. Thornton for his inspection.

"I know not wherefore we should form such a conclusion," rejoined Emma; "though my father and uncle were not friends, the baronet can have no enmity to me; and as the head of our family, and my nearest relative, he must feel that he is the fittest person to be the legal protector of his orphan niece."

Mr. Dillon smiled a very soft smile, and yet it bespoke derision, and sarcastic dissent.

"You don't know your uncle, my dear Miss Saville, as well as I do," he said, "or you would not indulge such a fancy; and if you could form an idea of his whimsical and tyrannical humours, you would implore him to throw up the trust. Your father having been so long separated from him, was ignorant of the changes which time had made in his character, or he would not have exposed you, to become the slave of his caprices."

"I have always heard Sir Charles Saville highly spoken of, as a fine specimen of an old English gentleman," said the curate.

“The admirers of the aristocracy so speak of him, no doubt,” answered Dillon, with a sneer. “It is happy for him that he is rich and a baronet, or they might have less admiration for his pride and his folly. Nevertheless, I am afraid they would materially interfere with my cousin’s happiness, should he accept the authority this will confers on him, whilst on the contrary, she may feel certain that her wishes should be the only guide of my conduct, in the direction of her affairs.”

The lawyer looked at Emma, as he ceased speaking, but she made him no reply, and remained silently observing Mr. Thornton, till he had finished the perusal of Major Saville’s will.

“I am glad to see, that my old friend has left his daughter sufficient to make her independent,” was the curate’s observation as he concluded. “He told me he had saved in India, and had employed a friend to purchase stock for him.”

“If that was the case,” said Dillon, “no doubt the receipts and bonds will be forthcoming. If the money passed through the hands of a third

person, there will be evidence of the transaction, amongst the papers of the deceased."

"If the money passed through the hands of a third person?" repeated Mr. Thornton, fixing his eyes with astonishment on Dillon. "I always thought you were Major Saville's only adviser in such matters. Had not the cabinet better be searched?"

"Nothing more can be done at present," was Dillon's reply, "you must be aware, that I have no right to search anything in this house; nor in fact to do anything till the decision of Sir Charles Saville is known."

"A letter must be written to him immediately," rejoined the curate.

"Sir Charles is in Paris," was the reply. "But he is expected daily in London, and I think it best to go up, and have an interview with him, when I will place the will in his hands. I can be back in two days, and then all doubts and difficulties will be at an end."

"I should prefer the will remaining in the hands of Mr. Thornton, till it is decided under

whose guardianship I am to be placed," said Emma quietly. "You can surely have a copy made to show to my uncle, for it occupies scarcely a page."

"Ah—certainly—if you wish it," answered Dillon, looking at Emma with amazement; "upon my honour, I did not suppose you were such a capital woman of business."

With a glance of proud contempt, the girl took up the important document, and gave it to the curate.

"I know nothing of business," she replied, "but I know what were my father's wishes, and what are my own. It was Major Saville's ardent desire, that his death might put an end to all the misunderstandings which have so long disunited our family, and to effect that he named my uncle, my guardian. Should you have an interview with Sir Charles, I beg you will inform him of this; and tell him that it is now as much my desire, as it was my father's, that I may enjoy his kindness and protection."

"Though your wishes are not flattering to

myself, you may rely upon my obeying them, in all things," said the lawyer with a slight bow. "I will wait on you immediately after my return, to inform you of the result of my mission. I should be glad if Mr. Thornton could make it convenient to meet me, and proceed to further arrangements, as circumstances may require."

To this the curate readily agreed, and Mr. Dillon then took leave of his orphan cousin, with an air of suitable sorrow and respect.

What reliance the girl placed upon his promises will be seen in a following chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Emma was left alone, she sat down quietly to reflect on all that had been said by Mr. Dillon, during that morning's interview. She felt that she ought to be obliged by his offers of service, and his proposed mediation with her uncle; but she had learnt from her father, that she ought never to trust another to do what she was able to do for herself.

She had never known Sir Charles Saville, *even when* a child, but he was her father's only *brother*, and whatever might have been the *cause* of *their* estrangement, it was still her duty

to write to him and inform him of the Major's decease, and invite him to the funeral.

She wrote, therefore, and yielding to the warmth of her feelings, her letter was not one of cold and formal ceremony, but was addressed to the nearest relative of her lost parent, as if she felt no doubt that he must naturally participate in her sorrow for the death of his only brother. No answer was returned to her, and when Dillon came back from London, he informed her that Sir Charles Saville had gone to Brussels, instead of coming direct to England, and all letters were to be forwarded to him there.

It was a dreary pause in the life of the young orphan, till the day of her father's funeral arrived. In spite of all the trouble Mr. Dillon took to please her, his company was unpleasant to her, and more tedious than solitude. The visits of Mr. Thornton and his sister afforded her nosolace, for the worthy couple, though very good, were not amusing, and could neither share the confidence, nor awaken the sympathy, of a young, ardent, and impassioned girl, who had already

had large experience of the vicissitudes and excitements of an eventful life.

With little Harry, her ward, she alone felt some relief to her solitude and her sorrow. He was to her the personification of the days that were gone—happy days—happier now that the past had shrouded them in golden light. The boy was the only object left for her to love, and to love was a necessity of her nature; even more essential to her happiness than the love of others. Little Harry was innocent and true, and loved her as tenderly in his childish way, as the friend who had confided him to her care.

Emma had promised, two years before, whilst in the north of India, to supply the place of a mother to that little boy, and nothing which Mr. Dillon or any prudent advisers could have said, about the imprudence of her retaining such a companion, could have persuaded her to part with him, unless convinced that it was for the boy's advantage.

The loss by death of those we love, she felt was inevitable, and must be borne with resigna-

tion, but voluntarily to rend asunder the ties which bound her to that child, for motives of interest, was, she considered, wilfully to put a living death between Harry and herself, which, loving him as she did, would be little short of madness.

She had resolved, therefore, to support and educate the boy, even though it might be necessary for her to work for their daily bread. It was wonderful how such thoughts alleviated her sorrow for her father's death. The consciousness that she, in her turn, had to sustain a helpless orphan through the troubles of life, and that her existence was absolutely necessary to his well being, gave her spirit to act and think with energy, instead of brooding vainly over the past.

That innocent child seemed like an angel sent by heaven, to lead her on through paths of purity, and industry, and peace; and his young protectress felt an assurance that the spirit of the departed would watch over them, and protect them through life.

The day of Major Saville's funeral came at last, that day when the bereaved, wearied and stupified by sorrow, is aroused to feel a second, time all the anguish of separation from the loved and lost.

Emma sat alone in a darkened chamber with little Harry, no friend near to comfort her. She listened eagerly to the departing footsteps of the bearers, from the adjoining room, and when the house was again quiet, when the dead was borne away, and all around her was void and still, she wept with such violence, that the child, awed by her sorrow, stood motionless in wonder at her side. But gradually she became more calm; and on the morrow, when the windows were opened, and the sun shone once more into the room, she felt that life was still busy around her, and that she, too, had her appointed course to run, and duties to fulfil, incompatible with the idle indulgence of useless sorrow.

In the absence of Sir Charles Saville it had been necessary for Mr. Dillon to take all the duties, as the executor of the deceased, upon

himself. He had arranged the funeral, and he afterwards discharged all standing debts. Emma lost no time in removing into a small lodging, so that the property in her father's house might be sold. When all was done, Mr. Dillon called to speak with her, as to her future plans and prospects.

"He was shocked to tell her," he said, "that her father had left her almost penniless. Though he had bequeathed her two thousand pounds in the Stocks, he had learnt on enquiry, that no such sum was to be found. Though he had mentioned American bonds, nothing of the kind was amongst his papers. His pay had, of course, died with him; but, fortunately, five hundred pounds remained in the banker's hand. Fifty pounds had been found in the house, which, with the proceeds of the sale, left, after all the debts and funeral expenses were paid, a balance of eighty two pounds, which he placed in her hands.

Emma was both shocked and astonished by this unexpected intelligence. Though not rich, she had trusted to the dispositions of her father's

will, and believed herself secure from poverty. But Mr. Dillon's disclosures at once convinced her, that for the future she had her bread to earn, either entirely by her own hands, or by the assistance of the little capital which remained in the banker's hands.

Yet still the story seemed almost incredible to her, so firm was her reliance on her father's love, and so intimate her knowledge of the economy he had practised for years, in order to secure a comfortable provision for her, in case of his decease.

"The money was placed in your hands, I believe, Mr. Dillon," she said, with some hesitation.

"Yes, certainly it was—that is to say—some money, some five hundred pounds, if I remember right," he replied, with smiling deference, "but Major Saville received it all back again, by degrees. I believe that is part of it which is now in the bank. It really is a most unpleasant affair for his executors, but I see no help for it. I should advise you to come over to Walton, to

be near my mother and sister, who are your nearest female relations. You can board there very cheaply at the curate's till you come of age—the time is now very short, and after that you must sink your money, my dear cousin; and I will speak to Sir Charles Saville to make you an allowance to help it out. I fear there is nothing better to be done under existing circumstances."

"I thank you," answered the girl coolly, "I am not acquainted with your mother and sister, and I have no wish to go to Walton. Allow me to add that I desire no one to intercede for me with Sir Charles Saville; I am his brother's child, and I have already written to him."

"You have written to him!" echoed Dillon, forgetting all politeness in his astonishment at the girl's decided bearing.

"I thank you, Mr. Dillon, for the trouble you have taken," continued Emma, without appearing to notice the interruption, "and when I receive my uncle's answer, I shall know whether or not I am still to be under your guidance;

but you no doubt remember that I am, even now, at liberty to reside where I please."

"Certainly, most certainly," replied the lawyer quickly. "I merely mentioned Walton, as my sister is about your own age, under thirty at least, and you would no doubt find her company a relief in your present affliction. My mother, too, was known many years ago to your father, who liked her much; since she has become a widow, she has left Devonshire, and resides much with me. You would find her a sweet woman, and she is already disposed to welcome you with affection. It would certainly be most eligible for you to reside at Walton."

"I am not of that opinion," answered Emma quietly.

And then, until Mr. Dillon departed, she spoke of other matters.

But still the lawyer was always smiling and agreeable; and he even appeared anxious to extend a portion of his affection to little Harry. He produced sugar plums and toys, which he had brought for him in his pocket, and

tried to coax him into familiarity; but the child, whether he disliked him by instinct, or was frightened by the very searching looks with which the lawyer had, every time they met, surveyed his pretty features through his spectacles, rejected his proffered presents, and escaping from him as soon as he could get loose, crept close to his aunt Emma's side for protection.

But even after Mr. Dillon had settled Miss Saville's most pressing affairs, he remained a week at Olten. He was happy, he said, to be detained there by business, and thus enabled to enjoy his cousin's society.

His kindness during that time was unobtrusive, and his conduct so discreetly insinuating, that Emma, in her honest conscientiousness, at length reproached herself for her dislike to a man who gave himself so much disinterested trouble on her account. But still she could not overcome the feeling, nor receive his visits with pleasure.

Mr. and Miss Thornton spent many hours of each day with her, and Dillon only came when

he knew they had returned home. His manners were then kind, but not familiar, and he seemed unconsciously to betray the highest respect and brotherly regard for his fair cousin.

As a man of the world, he might have smiled at the fervour with which she at times expressed her very unworldly feelings; but he did not. As a man of the world, he might have derided the romantic generosity of character she frequently betrayed, but no sarcastic smile ever curled his thin lips. When Emma was sad his face became unusually grave, and though he did not speak his grief for her father's loss, to which she never alluded, he looked, at times, as if he lamented him exceedingly.

Yet in spite of his endeavours to please, Miss Saville rejoiced when Mr. Dillon finally took his departure from Olten, and yet more so, when she understood that his numerous engagements would prevent his speedy return.

She was no sooner certain that he had left the place, than she began to make hasty preparations for the performance of a plan she had for

some time decided on, though certain that Mr. Dillon would have opposed it; and detesting disputes and arguments, she had hitherto kept profound silence on the subject.

She had determined to leave Olten without delay, and her own and little Harry's wardrobe were already packed; so that before the lapse of another day she was seated with the little boy in a railway carriage, which was bearing them rapidly to the village of Winside, near the sea coast, where Miss Saville had determined to take up her residence.

CHAPTER V.

Two days after Robert Charlton had so abruptly left Alten, towards the close of evening, he was walking at a brisk pace along the smooth sands of the sea shore, many miles away from that city.

Heavy grey clouds concealed the setting sun, but the waters of the great ocean were calm, and rippled in with gentle murmurs, to break in long lines upon the shore. If a human being appeared from time to time upon the strand, it was afar off, like some black insect on the boundless space, and strange thoughts of omnipotence thronged on the old man's mind as he

gazed over the measureless waters, and the countless sands over which he trod.

Suddenly the way was obstructed by fallen rocks, and a sharp cliff, high and precipitous, jutted out from the main land into the sea, as if to cut off all further passage. A path turned up a sandy bank into the upper country, and this was the direct road to the neighbouring fishing town, but the tide was low, and Robin pursued his way along the base of the cliffs. It was less difficult than it at first appeared, and after he had clambered over a pile of rocks overgrown with black sea-weed, he passed with ease round the point of the promontory, and entered a little bay which lay beyond it. Here the sands were as smooth as on the open coast for the distance of about a quarter of a mile. The banks then became less precipitous, and between two high hills a green valley sloped to the very confines of the sea. Down the middle of this, in a rugged cleft, flowed a small brook which, fed by the mists of the upper hills, was soon to be lost in the ocean.

On its banks, almost to the verge of the sands, grew a few scattered, stunted trees, and higher up there were traces of cultivation round a low-roofed cottage, which could then scarcely be distinguished in the deepening gloom of evening. No other habitation was in sight, and from this lonely dwelling, shut in by the downs on every side, there could be no prospect but across the sea. Yet it was evident it was inhabited, for smoke was rising from the chimney, and a light already gleamed from one of its small windows.

This served as a guide to the pedlar, when, quitting the beach, he turned up a narrow path by the side of the stream, which led by a steep ascent to the cottage. It seemed intended for none but smugglers, and the old man was obliged to pause more than once to recover breath during his progress, before he reached the little platform in front of the humble building.

He looked in at the window; an old fisherman and his wife, who was Robin's sister, were sitting by the fire, the man smoking, and the

woman knitting, and when the pedlar was certain that there was no one else in the hovel, he knocked boldly at the door. The good people gave him a hearty welcome. Their son was out with the boat, they said.

"And is anybody with him?" asked Robin sharply.

The woman looked at her husband, as if to enquire what answer she ought to make.

"Robin knows everything, that is certain," answered the old fisherman, in the dreamy way of a thorough smoker, without taking the pipe from his mouth.

"To be sure I do. Who sent him here, do you think, but me?" answered the pedlar. "I am not going to give an old friend up to justice. But where is he?"

"He wrote to somebody four days ago," replied his sister, "and he began to get tired of waiting here for an answer, so he persuaded my son to take him in his boat round the point to Seaport, that he might go to the post office, to enquire if anything was lying there for him."

"Do you expect them home to-night?" demanded Robin.

"I don't believe that he'll come back here at all," said the fisherman, interposing. "He said to Jim that if he found no letter, he would be off at once, and see what was going on inland."

"He surely would not venture to cross the country alone," said the pedlar, anxiously.

"As Jim is not back yet I suppose they have agreed to pass the night at Seaport together; for the lad has taken such a liking to him, he'd go or stay anywhere to please him. He is not known there; and as the people all over this part of the country believe he has been in his grave these six years, there is nobody likely to suspect him for one night at least."

"They cannot sleep in the boat," said Robin.

"They are not such fools as to try," said the gruff old fisherman; "they'll get a warm glass and good beds at the Jolly Angler, on the quay. That's where Jim stays whenever he is kept away on business."

"If you think I shall find them there, I'll be

off without losing another minute," answered Robin. "Had I guessed they were not here, I might have been in the town by this time."

"You know Jim, so maybe you may find them," returned the old woman.

"Aye, and I know his companion, too," was Robin's reply; and taking up his stick, he walked towards the door.

"You knew him once, you should say," rejoined his sister; "but he is so altered, you would never guess that he was once the flaxen-haired boy we were all so fond of, when Jimmy was a lad and my good man at sea."

"In the West India fleet," muttered her husband, between two puffs of smoke.

"So he is changed—that is well," returned the pedlar; "he'll be less likely to be found out to be living, by them who wished him in his grave from the day he was born, and are happy to believe him there now."

"He looks old and sorrowful like, yet he is a year younger than my Jim," said the old woman. "His pretty mouth is buried in an ugly

beard, and his hands are as brown as my son's; you won't know him, anyhow."

"We shall see: so good night to you both," answered the pedlar; and then without another word he passed away into the darkness.

It was, indeed, by this time a gloomy night. Though not cold, the wind came howling dismally from the sea, and the waves, which it was driving ever higher and higher against the shore, were gushing against the rocks with a dismal sound, which since the set of sun had gradually increased. The crescent moon was up, but a large heavy cloud obscured it, as Robin left the cottage; its rays, however, fell beyond it, on the top of the hill he had to pass, and made the darkness transparent in the wild and narrow path which was his shortest way to the town.

Perfectly acquainted with the country, which in youth and age he had often trodden by day and by night, he walked on without hesitation. He knew where to avoid the morass on the edge of the downs; he knew exactly how far

he must skirt the old stone wall before he passed it; he knew that the dark patches before him were furze bushes, which he must make a circuit to avoid; and when the cloud passed from the moon, he had only a short distance to go along an open road before he reached the little fishing town of Seaport.

All the way as the pedlar advanced, he was thinking anxiously of the man whom in hopes to meet, he had that day and the day before walked many weary miles. Robin knew that his position was one of great danger, and he dreaded lest his wild and impetuous character might bring him into difficulties before he could join him, or could exert his influence to temper his impatience, and to keep him secreted till by prudent management his fortunes wore a fairer aspect than they had done for many years. The old man would have given his life to serve him, yet they had not met for six years, and his course had been wayward and full of error; but he possessed the faculty of winning devoted attachment, and Robin loved him as a son. That night, as he paced in this

man's service, without hope of reward, over the wild hills, though his aged limbs were weary, and his strength nearly exhausted, his most ardent desires were that misfortune might have chastened his character, and that his future days might be happier, and more blameless than the past.

Though Rohin could obtain no tidings, either of Jim or his companion, at the Jolly Angler, he went patiently on to seek them, at the other public-houses in the place; and though the fisherman was well known in Seaport, he could no where learn that he had been seen there that day.

Exhausted by fatigue, and saddened by disappointment, as was rarely the case with him, Robin remained at the last public-house he visited, to take a little beer and bread, to give him strength to renew his search.


Several labouring men were in the kitchen where he sat, enjoying their evening potations, but when he learnt that Jim had not been seen there for a week, he spoke no more to anyone.

He began to fear, that the two young men had rashly gone up into the country, in search of him, and might perhaps, get into serious difficulties before he was able to discover them.

No sooner had he finished his simple repast, than anxious and uneasy, he again arose, and having paid his reckoning, went out into the street and strolled on, almost unconscious whither he was going. So deeply was he engaged in the consideration of the different courses which remained for him to pursue, that he took no notice of a small covered cart, drawn by a shaggy pony, which was coming towards him, up the uneven street. The driver was on foot, and as he approached him, called loudly to Robin, to get out of the way.

The Pedlar started, for though nobody could be recognised in the gloom, the voice was that of his nephew Jim.

“Where upon earth are you driving at this time of night?” demanded the Pedlar, seizing him eagerly by the arm.



"Uncle Robin! where do you come from?" was the young man's only reply.

"I have been to the cottage, but I heard there, you had brought my friend into town," he returned. "What have you done with him?"

"He is in the cart," answered the fisherman, pointing to the one he drove. "We have had an accident."

"Aye! I don't wonder! I knew something would be sure to go wrong," answered the Pedlar eagerly. "What has happened?"

"He slipped his foot in landing," answered the youth, "and sprained his ankle so bad, he cannot stir a step, so I got one of the smugglers to lend me a cart, with a truss of straw in it, and I am taking him up the country, as he desired me."

"But where are you going?"

"To one of the public-houses at Winside."

"That would be madness," responded the old man. "Go you home, my lad. Your mother will sit up half the night, if you don't come back, and I will take charge of your passenger. Only

tell me where I am to take the cart, after I have got him to a place of safety."

"To Ned Smith's in the Crow Lane," said his nephew, and as Robin perfectly understood the locality, no further explanation was needful.

This conversation, after the first exclamations, had been carried on in so low a tone, that the passenger in the cart, not having distinguished its import, remained perfectly still; nor did Jim think it necessary to explain to him, that he had a new conductor, but hastily wishing his uncle good night, he left him to provide for the safety of his friend, as he judged expedient.

Robin had already decided what to do, but as he was by this time pretty nearly exhausted, he mounted, and took his seat on a board swung in front of the cart, intending to ride to their place of destination, which was some miles off. In fact, the Pedlar though a good walker, having been on foot since six o'clock in the morning, could not have proceeded from Seaport, unless he had found such a mode of conveyance. But

though fatigued, he was happy that he had arrived so opportunely, to the assistance of the man, on whose safety much depended, in which old Robin took a profound interest.

Their way lay inland, over an open though not uncultivated country, sometimes amidst grazing lands, and at others, near the brink of the steep banks of the river, which fell into the ocean at Seaport. Not a tree, for more than two miles, broke the dark outline of the sombre landscape, but as they advanced, stunted hedges began to bound the road, and then a weather beaten ash tree, was from time to time, visible in the moonlight.

Three miles they had travelled, and not a living creature had appeared upon the road, and Robin was exulting at the idea of soon bringing his adventure to a successful termination, when he was suddenly accosted by a mounted patrol, belonging to the coast guard.

The neighbourhood was reported to be infested by smugglers, and certainly the appearance of

the pedlar and his equipage was sufficient, at that hour of the night, to excite suspicions of contraband dealing.

When commanded by the horseman to stop, the old man would gladly have driven on with increased speed, had he not known that such disobedience would have been worse than useless. His horse was too slow-footed to afford him a chance of escape. He drew up, therefore, and asked the patrol, with an air of stupid simplicity what was his pleasure.

"It is my pleasure to know what you are driving about the country for at this time of night, and what contraband cargo you have got hidden under that suspicious looking tilt," answered the rider sharply.

"You think I'm a smuggler, I suppose," returned the pedlar, with a simple laugh, "but if you can seize no more brandy and tobacco to-night than you'll find in my cart, you'll make a bad job of it I'm thinking."

"We shall see," answered the patrol, and di-



mounting from his horse he lighted a lantern he took from his pocket, and walked round to the back of the cart.

A man's face, half covered by a thick black beard, was at the same moment thrust between an opening in the canvass covering, and a rough voice demanded why they stopped.

"You'll find nothing there but my nephew," said Robin, quickly interposing, for he had descended from his seat, and followed the patrol; "the poor fellow has just come home from the Indies, with a bad leg, and I am taking him up to the Infirmary."

"Aye, I see him plain enough, but who knows what may be hidden under the straw he is lying on," was the man's reply, and most unceremoniously he began to poke a long stick into various parts of the cart as he spoke.

"Deuced hard, that a man cannot be left to go along the King's highway in peace, and to sleep on his own bundle of straw, without being disturbed by the impudence of such as you," said the passenger with the black beard, in the

broad dialect of the fishermen of that coast. "If you can find any smuggled goods here, I give you leave to take them, but if you can't I advise you to be off, or you shall soon feel the ———."

"Never mind him," said Robin, hastily interposing, so as to drown the last words of the speaker in the louder tones of his own voice, for he feared and disliked his violence; "the poor chap is half raving with the fever."

"I cannot find anything," said the patrol, whom the fear of infection had somewhat alarmed. "But don't be angry, I'm only doing my duty, and if you are honest men, I'm sorry I've troubled you."

A muttered curse, from the man in the cart, was the only reply, and the patrol rode off towards the town.

No sooner was he out of hearing than the stranger eagerly addressed the pedlar.

"Robin Charlton, is that you, my old fellow?" he said, in the accents of a gentleman. "When did you change places with Jim?"

"Just on coming out of the town," answered the pedlar, as again seated on his board he addressed his companion through a rent in the cover of the cart. "I sent him home, and luckily took charge of you myself."

"You got my letter then?"

"Truly, did I, and glad I was, that you were safe on English shore. But you must hide carefully yet awhile, though I have little fear but that we shall get all right again before long. No rascal's prosperity lasts for ever, and though one we know is riding a high horse at present, there may be a little nail out of its shoe, which he does not observe, and he may come to the ground when he least expects it. I'm right glad you have come home to help to trip him up."

"Oh, Robin," rejoined the stranger, "he is too virtuous, honourable, and prosperous a gentleman for me to hope to be a match for him. When a man is rich and liberal, no one will question his honesty; it is we unfortunate fellows, without a sixpence, who are looked on with suspicion. But where are you going to take me

to, old fellow? hardly any one will be glad of such a lodger."

"Not to a public house at Winside," returned Robin drily, "but to a safe hiding place, with one who is waiting anxiously for you, and where you can remain in peace till your sprain is better under her good care, for she will need no doctor to mend it."

"I guess whom you mean," said the stranger, "I should have gone to her at once, but I was ignorant whether she yet lived."

"Yes, she is alive," answered Robin; "some people hate her as much as ever, but the poor creature still contrives to earn a scanty livelihood, and is as ready to serve you as ever she was. She lives here!" he added abruptly, as he stopped his horse at the back door of a desolate house, which seemed, as far as could be discerned in the faint light of a declining moon, to be far distant from all other habitations.

"I called on my way to the seaside to tell her to get a bed ready for you in an upper room,

a poor place enough, but the hostess is honest and true, and I am afraid you must put up with rough fare for a time."

"Oh, I have done that long," answered the gentleman; "I am too old a soldier to care for anything of that kind, only this accident tries my patience. It is enough, you must allow, to provoke a man, to be made a helpless cripple at the moment when activity is of most importance to him."

"Maybe it is all for the best," answered the pedlar drily; "there is sometimes much mischief done by being in a hurry to force destiny; and just at present I believe the very best thing for you to do, is to keep quiet and bide your time. It's coming, sir—coming fast; but mind my words, and don't spoil all by trying to hasten it. I see there is somebody stirring now with a light, and as soon as I have got you safely into the house, I'll be off with the cart. Can you walk at all, sir?"

"A little," replied the gentleman, who had now put one foot to the ground; and then sup-

porting himself on the pedlar's stick on one side, whilst he leant on the old man on the other, he with difficulty entered the house, where a woman, who was standing with a candle in her hand, welcomed him with many expressions of joy.

They at length succeeded in getting the stranger up stairs, though with much difficulty; and when Robin had seen that proper remedies were applied to his sprained ankle, which was much swollen, and had given the mistress of the house repeated injunctions to take all possible care of her patient, he left the house, and seating himself on the cart, drove back with it to the owner.

That night he slept at Seaport; but early on the morrow he returned to the widow's cottage, and had a long and important interview with her secret guest.

CHAPTER VI.

EMMA arrived with her little companion at the village of Winside—where she had determined to fix her future residence—before the hour of noon. There were several reasons why she gladly dispensed with the services of old Mary, though she had been many years with her and her father; and having given her such a gratuity as she could afford, she left her to pass the remainder of her days with a relative in Olten.

She chose the secluded village of Winside for her solitary home, principally because her family was well known and respected there. Her uncle,

Sir Charles Saville, was the largest landed proprietor in the parish, and his mansion of Cleve Court stood only a mile and a half from the church. She herself had spent some years of her childhood with her father at her grandmother's jointure house in the neighbourhood, and she hoped that she might there receive a certain degree of consideration from the villagers, which in a place where she was entirely unknown her poverty would probably deprive her of.

She was immediately recognized by the landlady of the little inn where she alighted, and with the good woman's assistance, she succeeded, before the close of the evening, in engaging a furnished cottage, which had recently been left vacant, by the departure of a maiden lady, who had been summoned to attend a sick relative in a distant part of England.

It was very small, containing only a parlour and kitchen on the ground floor, and two little bedrooms above; but the rent was very low, which was, with Emma, its chief recommendation.

She had few possessions; but her father's books and some other objects she had kept back from the sale, and brought with her, added much to the apparent comfort of her little parlour, the furniture of which was perfectly simple, but bright and clean.

The cottage stood on a high bank, above a narrow road, leading from the south side of the village street, down to the river, which flowed between steep banks, at the distance of about a mile.

The old Norman church, and the churchyard where her mother lay buried, were opposite the windows, and the Vicarage stood in an old fashioned garden to the east of both. There was little beauty anywhere, and except the Vicar's fruit trees, three stunted elms, which grew before Emma's door, were the only specimens of foliage near the exposed and naked village. But the cottages, which were chiefly occupied by the workmen at an iron foundry, and agricultural labourers, though without gardens, or tasteful ornaments, were strongly built of stone, and the

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abundance of coals afforded an essential element to the comfort of the poor.

There was nothing either romantic, picturesque, or sentimental in the whole place, and even in Emma Saville's dwelling, the only poetry was in her own mind. Her mind, in fact, made her entirely independent of outward circumstances, and she repined neither at the want of beauty in the scenery, nor of luxury in her village home.

The want of affection was alone to her a bitter deprivation. She felt keenly, also, her unprotected position. She was not one of those masculine or emancipated young ladies, who rejoice in the freedom from control, and are proudly delighted to do battle with the world alone. On the contrary, it was with extreme pain that she felt her present lonely position was forced upon her by the neglect of her nearest relative, and the total want of any true friend in whom she could confide.

In a country like England, where success in life, or rather in society, depends upon connec-

tion, a solitary girl, without fortune and without friends to introduce her well into the circle to which by birth she belongs, has indeed a dreary position. Emma felt this; yet she felt that she was well born, she had been educated, like all the poorer scions of good families in England, even to over estimate the value of birth, and she was very proud; and this pride was another reason why she preferred a residence in a poor village to a home in a large town, where she would have been daily exposed to the condescending civility of the wealthy.

Emma well knew that to support her solitude and her poverty, without repining, she must work hard; but when her house was arranged, she felt at a loss to decide what her occupation was to be. She had heard of young ladies being very charitable and visiting the poor, and teaching at Sunday schools, and she had previously formed some vague notions of reforming the whole village, and training the rising generation to be fit to become angels in heaven; but after a few attempts, she found that the cottagers were offen-

ded by anyone interfering with them, and were as obstinately attached to their own habits and ideas, as any educated member of the upper classes can be. She thought about establishing a school for the poor, but she was conscious that though little Harry had long been her pupil she knew little how to guide and train an assemblage of rude, unmannered children.

Yet, though mortified by the conviction of her inability to put any extraordinary plans in execution, she still felt with a great German writer, that by labour and prayer all the difficulties of life may be overcome; and though her romantic schemes of benevolence had failed, she soon found that peace of mind, even in such a deep seclusion as she had chosen, is the certain reward of a series of small occupations, undertaken in a gentle and loving spirit for the service of others, which leave no time for useless repining or dreams of a past, which can never be recalled, or futile imaginations of a future which may never arrive.

It became her daily habit, to arise with the

sun, and after directing a young maiden she had taken into her service to arrange the house, and prepare the breakfast, she dressed little Harry, heard his childish prayers, and then after their simple meal, passed an hour with exemplary patience, in the difficult task of endeavouring to fix his attention to his lessons, but the little boy was so enchanted with the novelty of everything around him, with the garden and the trees, which Aunt Emma allowed him to call his own, that for some time after their arrival at Winside, he profited little by her teaching.

When all her arrangements for her permanent establishment at Winside were concluded, Emma considered it proper to inform Mr. Dillon of the step she had taken. She decided, therefore, to write to him, but as briefly as possible. She requested him to inform her, should he receive any communication from Sir Charles Saville, and expressed a hope that her pecuniary affairs might, on further investigation, turn out better than he at first supposed. She then repeated her thanks for the trouble he had already taken

on her account, and concluded without making any further disclosures concerning her present position, or future plans.

Taking little Harry by the hand, she carried this letter to the post herself, and then leaving the village, she walked thence over the fields, which, sloping to the south, gradually assumed a richer vegetation, till at a mile's distance, the landscape became rich and beautiful.

The oppressive air of the sultry day weighed heavily on her spirit, and languid, sad, and hopeless, she wandered on, careless whither she went; and who has not dragged through such weary hours of sameless existence, which when they have afterwards looked back to them, from active life, appear a wasted portion of our being? Yet they "also serve, who wait," and in these very hours, so still, and apparently so void of vital interest, events may be ripening, or perhaps then passing, in some other place which may influence the whole course of our future destiny.

Emma found herself at length close to Thorn

Lodge, the house where she had formerly resided with her father, but which her uncle, since his mother's decease, had let to a wealthy ship owner from Seaport, whose father had made money by smuggling.

She readily obtained admittance to the grounds with her little companion, but if she had expected pleasure, she was disappointed; if she sought the past, she was only made to feel more keenly, that even from the home of her youth, its records had been swept away. Strangers dwelt there—strangers who had no loving remembrance of those who had trained the jasmine and honeysuckle over the moss grown walls of the old summer-house, and the sun-dial, and the fragrant creepers under whose shadow the young girl had once sat with delight, were all torn down. There was not a trace to be found of the old gravel walks, and flower-beds, and strawberry-beds, and gooseberry bushes, and cherry trees! All were swept away, and grass-plots and shrubberies, and evergreens, had replaced these more productive ornaments of olden times.

Emma could have drawn a plan of the old fashioned gardens, with their fragrant pinks, and rosemary, and stocks, and the mignonette under the green-house wall, where the bees hummed pleasant music in the summer days, and the sly blackbirds thronged, to feast on the ripe fruit and then paid back their theft, in song. She had seen that pleasant place full often in her dreams, but its memory was always mingled with that of her mother, and a little sister, who had been the playmate of her childhood ; but now she found that the dead were not more changed than the home where she had dwelt with them.

The souls of men, like a great ocean, leave their impress on the face of the earth, as they pass over it, and another generation had already been there destroying the traces of that which had preceded it. The house, the gardens, and the grounds had been modernized to suit the taste of the rich ship-owner who tenanted it; and wealth had destroyed the venerable remains which aristocratic taste had preserved, out of respect for the past.

Emma had seen enough to know that this is a change going on throughout England, and is by many considered to be civilization and progress; but she grieved that a wealthy man like her uncle should, for a paltry rent, have permitted the desecration of the ancient mansion of his family. It increased the fear she already felt of him; and when she reflected on all she had seen, she dreaded the renewal of their intercourse after the baronet's return, for she feared there could be little harmony between them.

Such thoughts were interrupted, as she was returning home along the high road, by the calls of little Harry, who, after vainly attempting, by clambering up a bank, to get at a bunch of wild roses which waved temptingly in the air, now summoned Aunt Emma to assist his depredations. But they were far beyond her reach, and she was vainly attempting to drag them down with a crooked stick, when the voice of a man behind her politely inquired if he could be of any service.

Emma turned with surprise, and saw that the

speaker was a gentleman of about thirty years of age, whom she had already seen at church, and whom she knew to be the village surgeon.

He could not be called handsome, but there was a grave dignity in his countenance and in the carriage of his rather tall figure, which impressed, even those to whom he was unknown, with involuntary respect.

Emma, blushing and laughing, accepted his proposition with thanks, and little Harry, who, in his rambles in the village, had already made acquaintance with Mr. Vaughan, clapped his hands with glee when he saw him pull down the roses, and gather for him all he had most ardently desired to possess.

"Oh, how I wish I was a man!" cried the little fellow as he received the coveted nosegay.

"You are happier as you are, my little fellow," answered the surgeon, with a kindly smile, which made his dark face almost handsome, and then evidently unwilling to intrude longer on Miss Saville, he bowed and walked on.

"Oh, how I like Mr. Vaughan!" cried little

Harry, as he looked with triumph at his nosegay; but Emma took one of his little hands in hers, and walked on in silence. Yet she felt almost what the child had expressed. There was something about the surgeon which excited both her curiosity and her interest, and she wondered more than once that evening what could have induced a man like Mr. Vaughan to settle in such a secluded village as Winside. She did not know him, yet she felt certain he was no common person, and one day, when she had inquired of the parish schoolmaster, where books could be procured, he told her that Mr. Vaughan and Mr. Ashley, the Vicar, were the only persons in the village who had libraries.

The latter gentleman, unluckily for Emma, was absent from his parish during the first weeks of her residence there, but at length, when she returned one day from a long walk, she was told by her little maiden that the Vicar had called during her absence.

Having known him when she was a child, she no sooner heard this than she resolved

to go at once, and return his visit without delay.

Her way lay across the church-yard, and though the spring was melting into summer, a sharp wind blew from the sea, and waved the rank grass on the graves, where the ground was wet with recent rain. Emma felt timid and anxious as to the reception she might receive, and there was nothing cheering in the path she trod; but when her eyes fell on the stone which marked her mother's grave, and the word *eternity* thereon engraved, she went on, sadly, but courageously.

Mr. Ashley, she had heard, was an eccentric man, and an old widower; but in what way he differed from the rest of the world she was entirely ignorant.


The garden which Emma passed to arrive at the front door of the vicarage, was laid out with taste, and in excellent order; but the house had a more neglected appearance. Built of rough stones, neither paint nor plaster had embellished it since Mr. Ashley came there, more than thirty years before, and there was a primi-

tive simplicity in its architecture which betokened little luxury within.

The old woman who opened the door seemed greatly astonished at such a visitor as Miss Saville, but conducted her without hesitation to a parlour on the ground floor. It was scantily and meanly furnished, with a small square carpet on the middle of the floor; and though the sun shone in at the curtainless window, it still looked cheerless and deserted.

Emma heard the servant ascend the stairs, and then heavy steps rapidly approached, the parlour door was thrown open, and Mr. Ashley, holding forth both hands towards her, and saluting her by name in a mild and friendly voice, advanced towards her.

He was a short, thin man, about sixty; his forehead high and broad, his features fine and regularly proportioned, and his eyes large, dark, and remarkably vivacious and intelligent, though overshadowed by bushy black eyebrows, which contrasted strangely with his long locks of silver hair. His dress was by no means clerical, for




he wore an old velvet shooting jacket, with innumerable pockets, and short black breeches, and stockings, only partly covered by thick-soled boots, which, cut off round at the tops, did not reach above his ankles.

Yet even in this costume Mr. Ashley retained the manners and address of a gentleman, and he received Miss Saville with distinguished courtesy.

"My dear young lady," he said, after their first greetings were over, "this comfortable parlour is not a proper place for you. You must favour me by coming up stairs to my den; you will find it in perfect confusion, as I am not frequently honoured by female visitors. It was different once, perhaps; but you will excuse all that, and allow me to show you the way, and as I hear you have come to reside in Winside, I hope you will often frequent it for the future."

The Vicar, without waiting for a reply, then ascended the stairs, where the carpets, though perfectly clean, had been fading in the sun for more than a quarter of a century. The paint of



all the room doors was nearly worn away by washing, and the bookcases in the large room on the first floor, to which Emma was conducted, had never been painted at all.

Many thousand volumes were assembled in that room. Bound and unbound, old and new, gilt and faded books of all shapes and sizes, were piled on tables, chairs, and on the floor; all ghosts of the mighty dead, as various in aspect as the minds of the men had been whose thoughts, like mummies in their coffins, were there embalmed, for the wonder and admiration of long succeeding generations.

The sun shone between the scanty white curtains on two canaries, who in their cages were singing their very loudest and shrillest notes. A large black spaniel lay asleep on a rug before the fire, a huge tabby cat sat winking its eyes in the sunshine, on a table covered with coarse green baize, on which were piles of books and papers, with an inkstand much used, and a variety of newspapers, flower seeds, fishing tackle, and sermons.

"My dear Miss Saville," said the old gentleman, whilst he placed her a chair, "I hope you won't find my fire too warm, for I am seldom without one. I have it nearly all the year round, more for company than warmth. Ah, you look at my canaries and my dog; those animals understand me better than my parishioners, and mine is a lonely student's life. But I won't complain; it would be bad taste to give you such a welcome, but I have been buried here so long myself, that it surprises me the more that a young creature like you should come to seek a living grave at Winside."

"My father's death has left me with small means and no protection," was Emma's simple reply, "and I have thought it best to make myself a home where my name at least is known, and may ensure me respect."

"No protection!" cried the Vicar; "your uncle, Sir Charles Saville, is still alive, and surely, though he may have been at variance with your father, he cannot shut his doors against his unoffending orphan niece."

"My father appointed my uncle my guardian," was Emma's reply, "but he is now on the continent, and I have not yet received any answer to the letter I wrote to him."

"So, he is your guardian!" exclaimed the Vicar; "that is well, though he is a strange man; it is possible you may get on with him, but I never could. But I am odd myself, and cannot cringe to tyrants, and I hate vanity, as I hate—but I beg your pardon, Miss Saville; my language is strong, I fear, for a young lady's ears, but forty years' banishment from civilized society would make a savage of most men. Sir Charles Saville and I don't speak, the farmers are rather too rough shod for the vicarage, and till my new neighbour, Mr. Vaughan, came into the village, I had not spoken to an educated man, since your cousin Frank went away from amongst us."

"I have heard that his departure was occasioned by sad events," returned Emma.

The Vicar fixed his dark eyes eagerly upon her, as if lost in his own thoughts.

"Sad events! yes, sad indeed!" he repeated, after a minute's pause; "but they were all the consequences of man's evil passions."

"Frank's marriage offended the baronet, I have heard," said the girl, who was anxious to learn more of her cousin's history than her father had ever told her.

The face of the old man flushed red as crimson.

"My dear Miss Saville," he said, in a low husky voice; "he married my daughter."

"Pardon me," returned the girl, with timid embarrassment, "I meant not to re-awaken such painful recollections."

"My dear young lady," rejoined the old man, kindly taking her hand, "you are not to blame. The past is seldom absent from my mind, very seldom. I loved my child, and her death, which soon followed her secret and imprudent marriage, has made me lonely upon earth. Her melancholy fate was the consequence of her own imprudent conduct; yet I can scarcely blame her, she was a mere child. At sixteen she was secretly married to your cousin Frank, who wa-

then just twenty-one. Mr. Dillon's sister Laura, it was said, had previously considered him engaged to her, and to revenge the affront he had put upon her, by marrying another, betrayed the poor young couple to Sir Charles Saville before their child was born. There was dreadful villany at work; I know not all that passed, but my child took refuge here, whilst her husband, involved in debts, which his father refused to pay, and accused of some dishonourable money transactions, fled the country, and was subsequently outlawed."

"And your daughter?" demanded Emma timidly.

The vicar paused a moment, and brushed the tears from his eyes before he replied.

"Poor Lucy rests in the churchyard, beneath my windows," he said. "The news of her husband's disgrace, which she heard in spite of all my precautions, was the cause of her death. She expired in giving birth to a boy, three hours after she heard the fatal tidings. Peace to her soul!"

Emma softly echoed the old man's prayer. He pressed her hand in gratitude for her sympathy, and then turned hastily away to the window to master his emotion. Emma, deeply interested in a part of the history of her own family, which, in consequence of her long absence from England, she had never perfectly understood, sat musing silently on the story, till the Vicar again approached her, and resumed the conversation in his usual tone.

This time he spoke to her of her father, of the friendship which had formerly subsisted between them, and his regret for his death. Emma then ventured to ask him for the loan of books, and he offered her his whole library for her use.

"I have a little ward under my care," she added, "whom I have hitherto educated myself, but he is now six years old, and I should feel grateful if you could recommend anyone in the village, who could assist me by teaching him Latin. I must add that my means of payment are small, but if any father of a family would

permit him to receive instruction with his sons, I would gladly in return act as daily governess to his daughters."

"You are a brave girl," said Mr. Ashley, laying his hand kindly on Emma's shoulder, and looking earnestly at her sparkling and animated countenance. "I do know a tutor, who will be proud to serve your father's daughter! But he will require no payment—only a little patience with the oddity of his ways. He is somewhat hasty, and yet a child was very fond of him once, and though sometimes rough, my dear Miss Saville, his heart is full of love for little children, 'for of such is the kingdom of heaven!'"

"My dear sir, I can scarcely believe that I understand you aright," answered the girl timidly. "Can I dare to hope that you are willing to be little Harry's tutor?"

"Let me see him, my dear young lady! If he is your ward, and without the means of education, madam, it is my duty—it is my positive duty, to instruct him," returned the Vicar, "for to my certain knowledge, there is not another

man within the parish, who could construe the first lines of Virgil. All literature is sadly neglected now-a-days, which cannot be bought for a shilling, or does not teach a man how to make one."

The arrival of a stranger, at this moment interrupted their conversation, and Emma arose to depart, as a gentleman entered the room.

"But my dear Miss Saville, we have not yet settled the little affair we were discussing," said the Vicar, as he accompanied her to the door. "Can I call on you this evening, at six o'clock?"

"I shall be delighted to see you," replied Emma, and then with rapid steps she returned to her home; her lonely home, the very sight of which, from a distance, made her heart sink, with a weary weight of pain.

She had not learnt to love it yet, or to regard it as a quiet harbour, from the troubles of life. It was only a poor and solitary dwelling place, where the time of her brief abode had been spent in struggling for resignation and content. But little Harry was standing on the threshold,

to welcome her, and as he ran laughing to her, and held up his face to be kissed, she felt that she was less lonely than Mr. Ashley, and her heart was gladdened by the consciousness that she could give the boy a home, and train him to virtue and to industry; for it is not occupation alone, which can support the soul through life's trials, but that tender charity which is love, and bringeth peace which passeth all understanding.

CHAPTER VII.

THE visit of Mr. Ashley to Miss Saville's cottage was an important event in her little household. Harry was delighted to assist her in making preparations for his reception as their guest at tea, and with a loud cry of delight he ran clapping his hands to the front door as soon as he could distinguish the figure of the Vicar in the twilight, ascending the path to the house.

He did not allow him to knock, but threw the door open, crying eagerly, "Oh, I am so glad you are come, sir, tea is all ready, and Aunt Emma is waiting for you in the parlour!"

The clergyman laid his hand on the flaxen ringlets of the child, and smiled blandly at his eagerness.

"It is too dark for me to see you, my boy," he said, "but you have a merry voice. I hope we shall be good friends before long."

"Aunt Emma says you are the kindest friend she ever had," answered Harry; "but she is waiting in the parlour, and the cakes are all hot. I toasted one myself."

"I am so glad to hear, Miss Saville, that you have such a useful fellow to assist you in your housekeeping," said the Vicar with a smile as he entered the room where Emma held out her hand to welcome him.

Though summer was near, the evening was sombre and chilly, as is often the case at that season in our uncertain climate, and the lighted candles and a glowing fire gave such an air of comfort to the little chamber, that when Mr. Ashley had taken his place in an arm chair and looked around him, he expressed his astonishment that his hostess had been able, so speedily,

to make her home as comfortable as if she had lived in it for years .

He had scarcely ceased speaking, when little Harry entered, bearing a large plate of the toasted cakes, he anxiously longed to partake of. When he had placed them on the table the Vicar, for the first time, caught a full view of his face, and as he did so, he started, and, to the boy's amazement, uttered a loud expression of surprise. His gaze was wild, as he grasped Harry's arms, and, holding him towards the light, surveyed his features with the keenest scrutiny.

Tears filled the eyes of the old man as he continued, for more than a minute, to look earnestly at the boy, and then, relaxing his hold, he sunk back into his chair, and covered his face with his hands. Emma could not avoid noticing his agitation, and felt some uneasiness lest his little ward had made an unfavourable impression on him.

"No, no, my dear young lady," he answered to her expressions of anxiety, "don't send him

away, I like to have the little fellow near me; but I was startled by a most extraordinary resemblance. Don't be afraid, my dear boy, I shall not love you the less for it. But, indeed, Miss Saville, your ward bears the most remarkable likeness I ever beheld to one very nearly allied to me, at the same age. I could scarcely have supposed such a resemblance to be possible, except between near kindred, though my poor daughter was the image of her mother."

"Is your daughter at home at your house?" asked Harry, now creeping close to the old gentleman, and beginning to play with his watch chain.

"She is at home, my boy," answered the Vicar, "but her home is in heaven."

Emma was pained by the turn the conversation had taken, and endeavoured to divert Mr. Ashley's thoughts from the sad subject by her hospitable attentions. But though he partook of her good fare, and answered cheerfully to the light hearted prattle of the boy, it was evident, that, as long as Harry remained in the room, his thoughts often reverted to the past.

"He is a fine fellow," he said, when Emma returned, after conducting Harry to bed, "with a skin so fair, and such flaxen locks, he surely was not born in India?"

"I believe not," she returned. "His father was a British officer, to whom Major Saville was strongly attached, and about two years ago, when suddenly called to take part in the war in Burmah, he left him to our care, for his mother was already dead. The poor captain never returned, and when at last we saw his name in the list of the killed, we had no other course to pursue than to adopt the helpless orphan as our own child."

"And his name?" demanded Ashley.

"Arnold," replied Emma, whilst a slight tremour shook her voice, and blushes tinged her cheeks; "Arnold was the name by which his father was known in India, and he called his boy Harry Arnold when he committed him to my care."

The Vicar understood, by a change in Emma's tone of voice, and a certain reserve of manner,

of which she was herself unconscious, that she did not wish to be questioned further, and the surmises which had excited his curiosity were so vague, that he felt he had no excuse for doing so.

"Both you and Major Saville have acted in the noblest and most generous manner," he said solemnly; "Heaven, no doubt, will one day reward you by the boy's gratitude; I love him already for the resemblance I have mentioned to you, and you may be assured that I will give you all the assistance in my power to advance his education. I shall be delighted to have such a pupil, though I candidly confess to you that education in general is not my hobby. I am heartily sick of all the bawling and superficial instruction at the parish school, as well as of the noxious atmosphere in which young ideas are there expected to shoot, though it is more likely to stifle them."

"I am sorry to hear you say so," responded the girl, "for I have had an idea of employing part of my time in teaching a class at the girls' school."

“If you do them any good by your teaching it will be more than anybody else does,” answered the Vicar, with a very comical expression of countenance. “The children are all learning by rote a parcel of words they don’t understand, instead of being taught by experience the difference between right and wrong.”

“That is certainly the ground work of all education,” said the girl, somewhat surprised by the old man’s vehemence.

“But nobody is educated now-a-days, they are only taught,” cried Mr. Ashley. “There is far too much said about schools, and too little done. There are half a dozen women in this parish, who call themselves ladies, and who are very pious, and charitable, and active, but whether they do any good by their meddling with the schools and the poor I very much doubt. No, my dear Miss Saville, avoid a ladies’ committee as you would a flock of ancient geese; they go cackling about to every corner of the village, they poke their heads into everybody’s house, and because they give away a parcel of tracts,

they think they are models of perfection; but the poor dislike their meddling, and the schools would certainly go on quite as well without them."

"You are very severe, my dear sir," said Emma, smiling.

"Not at all," returned the old man, "education is not a thing to be played with, and made a sort of sentimental amusement for old maids. It is the training of an immortal soul to heaven, madam, it is the wise direction of a child in the way it should go; it is the teaching of God's moral laws, and not the teaching by rote of doctrines no child can understand, nor a cramming with long words and prodigious sums, which the poor can never make use of. It is the duty of government to provide proper instructors for the children of the people; and we parsons have no more business with their instruction than the old maid I so strongly object to. The proper place of teaching for the clergy is the pulpit on a Sunday, and in the dwellings of the poor at all times when by love and charity we may give them holy lessons."

"Then you won't allow me to find occupation in the school?" said Emma, laughing.

"Not regularly," returned Mr. Ashley, with great seriousness; "be kind to the poor mistress if you please, for it will be true charity to cheer her in her dreary task, but your going to the school, only distracts the attention and excites the vanity of the children, without assisting her. But, my dear young lady, if I am not mistaken, you have too noble a mind, and too much talent to be lost in teaching stupid children their letters. The minds of men, and women too, are fitted for various tasks, and you have higher duties assigned to you on earth, or I am much mistaken."

"But my obvious duties now are few," replied the girl, somewhat disappointed, "and I not only wish to be useful, but to avoid the danger of time hanging heavy on my hands."

"My child," said the old man solemnly, "there are pauses in existence when the battle of life is only heard afar off, and when, with peace around us, we must buckle on our armour in readiness

for action that is to come, if we wish to win the victory either in this world or the next. We must not always be thinking about teaching others, but we must improve ourselves. Work upon others by that which thou art, was the wise saying of a very great man; and whilst this beautiful world and all its glories lie around you to instruct and elevate your own soul, there can be little danger, if you properly peruse this book of God, that time can hang heavy on your hands. You may lack amusement in Winside, but depend upon it, a time will come in life, when you will look back with regret upon this pause of innocence and peace."

Emma felt the profound truth of these words; for she had already learnt from her own short experience that we can ill estimate the present till it is far from us.

"I have gone through much sorrow," she replied, "and am even now grateful for the peace I have found. Your presence, Mr. Ashley, has added a charm to my little dwelling it did not till now possess."

Emma blushed, and paused after she had pronounced these words, for she feared to express all the pleasure she had found in the vicar's conversation, lest it might sound like flattery.

Solitary old man! banished for more than half a century from the scenes and associates of his youth; condemned to preach to boors, who were incapable of comprehending all the noble ideas of his poetic and imaginative mind, associated with mediocrity, till he had almost lost the power to express in language the poetry of his soul; a gentleman amongst unmannered peasants, a scholar without sympathy, a tender, loving man with no object for his affections, who can say how blandly the gentle words of Emma and her looks of admiration fell upon his heart! He sat with his hands crossed on his knees, a smile of pleasure irradiating his expressive countenance, gazing at her with pure and fatherly affection, as he had formerly gazed upon his own daughter. Since his Lucy had been laid in the grave, such soft sensations had never thronged around his heart, nor since her voice

was hushed had he ever heard a word of tenderness from female lips. Many respected him, but none had loved him, or had ever shown that they were happier for his presence; but that evening he had once more the consciousness, without which no human being can be truly happy, that his existence contributed to the happiness of another.

He was cheerful and animated as he had not been for years. He talked of Emma's future prospects; he gave her much information as to the character of her uncle, and those by whom he was habitually surrounded and greatly influenced; but most of all he talked of little Harry, and the plans he intended to pursue in his education.

He agreed with Miss Saville that the boy should come to the vicarage on the morrow at ten o'clock, to commence his lessons, and to remain daily two hours in the forenoon; nor would Mr. Ashley accept even the remuneration of thanks for his instruction:—‘He should teach the boy to please himself,’ he said.

The following morning Emma did not fail to conduct her little ward to the vicarage at the appointed hour. The sun shone brightly on the churchyard graves, and all things wore a pleasanter aspect than on the previous day, when she entered Mr. Ashley's garden, and little Harry danced on before her with merry shouts and laughter.

The boy was already chattering with the vicar, when passing round a clump of shrubs, Emma saw them standing before the house door with another gentleman. The stranger's back was towards her, but at the sound of her footsteps on the gravel he turned suddenly, and their eyes met, and the girl involuntarily looked down beneath the searching glance he fixed upon her.

It was the same tall, intellectual looking man who had gathered the roses for Harry on the preceding day, and whom she knew to be Mr. Vaughan, the village surgeon. Though not stout, he was powerfully made, with a certain freedom and harmonious ease in all his

movements, which Emma had not failed to observe.

Some people pretend to decypher characters by hand-writing, and it is certain that everything a man does betrays the secrets of his soul to those who can interpret the dumb language of action. The very gait in walking betrays feebleness of character, or vanity, or reckless indifference, or pride, or irritability. There was evidently no vanity in Mr. Vaughan's character, but whatever his secret qualities might be, even those who saw him for the first time, could have no doubt, but that he was a man of strong intellect, remarkable energy, and great simplicity, and carelessness as to appearances.

As he looked down, and stroked the golden locks of little Harry, his sweet and pleasant smile gave sure indication of benevolence, though the flashing eyes, at times, could speak of an ardent temper and decided will.

Emma's first impulse had been to draw back, when she perceived the stranger, but was reassured by the Vicar's friendly salutation, as

he advanced to meet her, and taking her kindly by the hand, he introduced her to Mr. Vaughan.

Again she met the steady gaze of this gentleman's remarkable eyes, but this time their expression was softened by a smile, and they beamed with rays, which seemed to diffuse a sudden light over his whole face, the light of the soul!

Emma did not speak! a strange power at once mastered and subdued her will. But though conscious that she stood in the presence of a person of congenial feelings, the pleasure which this excited was mingled with fear, and for the first time in her life this gave an embarrassment to her manner.

"I am most happy to bring my only two civilized parishioners acquainted," said Mr. Ashley, with a smile. "Though I trust, the air of Winside will long keep Miss Saville and her little ward in excellent health, I am sure she will allow me to consider you as her medical adviser and should she, happily, not have need of you in that capacity, as an acquaintance who must

be agreeable to her. Yes, my dear young lady, my friend Vaughan is not a mere rustic disciple of Esculapius, he is as great a devourer of books as myself, a traveller who has been over half the world, a philosopher, and a philanthropist."

"You are indulging in your accustomed eloquence!" said the surgeon, laughing.

"I always wish to be eloquent, when I speak of my friends," answered the Vicar quickly; "I flatter myself I understand your value, though why a fellow with your talents should bury himself in such a quagmire of fatuity, as this secluded village, is, I confess, beyond my comprehension. Perhaps you will kindly explain this to Miss Saville."


"I fear it might be presuming too much on our short acquaintance, to do so at present," was the surgeon's reply; "nor, as Miss Saville has chosen the same place of abode, will she, probably, think my conduct so extraordinary as you do."

"Well parried, my dear friend," rejoined Mr. Ashley, gaily. "But it proves nothing. I know

there is a mystery, and some day you shall take me for your father confessor."

"I shall first call you to account then, my dear sir," said Mr. Vaughan. "You have never yet related to me the cause of your banishment, from the society you are fitted to adorn, to a place which, forty year ago, must have been as desolate as the top of the Cheviot."

"The tale is soon told," answered the Vicar, "I was a younger son, with a small fortune, and won distinction at the university. I became the private tutor of a young nobleman. I was found agreeable, I suppose, and was received at my patron's table, as one of his own family. I met in daily converse all the most distinguished men in the literary and political world. Wit, fancy, and imagination, and taste, qualities which I ever valued then, sparkled in the sunshine around me! My intellectual powers found sympathy and excitement, and their full exercise and enjoyment rendered this the brightest, if not the happiest period of my existence. But it was of short duration, and only seemed given to make



the darkness which followed more intense. My patron one morning entered the library, and abruptly offered me the living of Winside, worth six hundred a year; he intimated, that wishing to remove his son for a short time from home, he should be glad for me to go there, with as little delay as possible, and take my pupil to finish his studies at my secluded Vicarage. I was engaged to be married, and knew that my only hope of obtaining a provision in the church was from my patron. He admitted that Winside was dreary and desolate compared to the paradise in the West of England, where I had spent my youth; but he held out hopes of being able to recall me, before long, to some more agreeable residence, should any good preferment fall into his hands. My youthful imagination was then in all its most glowing ardour; I was keenly alive to all the beauties of art and nature, and I could ill describe to you my sensations when in a bleak, black March day, darkened by volumes of mist rolling up from the sea, which covered tree and hedge-row and grass, with

heavy moisture, I rode along through the deep heavy mud of the almost impassable lane, to the door of the stiff gloomy old house, which was to be my dwelling for the rest of my life. But worse than house or landscape was the social desolation of the neighbourhood, where, except at Cleve Court, during part of the year, not a gentleman resided for miles round. My brother clergy were all fox hunters. When my pupil had completed his studies, to keep him apart from a young lady he wished to marry, he was sent abroad, and I and my young wife were left alone together. The promises of my patron were for a short time repeated; then came excuses for their non-completion, and at last, hints that I was handsomely provided for. My pupil, after his travels, disgraced himself at college, and I was reproached for his deficiencies; a quarrel ensued, and my banishment here for life was the consequence. My patron and his sons have long since been dead, and all those who knew me under their roof have forgotten me as completely as if I lay in yonder churchyard.

Domestic sorrows were added to this great trial, till my bright fancy and my proud, and somewhat worldly spirit, were broken down, and I was taught submission to the will of heaven, and to look beyond the earth for happiness.

“When my last hour comes, what will it matter where the brief span of my earthly existence was spent? Though banished from society, I have sought and found amusements in fishing, and other out of door amusements; not very clerical perhaps; but when a man is so alone, as I have been, he must vary his occupations, to maintain the sanity of his mind. I hope I have done some good in my generation, and at least I can say, my parishioners and I have neither quarrelled about tithes nor altar candlesticks. I love many of them, and have formed ties to this old place, I would not willingly rend asunder. In forty years, an old tree twists its roots into many a cranny of the poorest soil, and there are two graves in that churchyard, near which I hope one day to rest. But now, my dear Miss Saville, though Mr. Vaughan may be satisfied

with an old man's confession, you are no doubt tired of such prosing, and little Harry is impatient to begin his lesson. I will bring him back to you, at the end of two hours."

"Your story is more interesting than mine would be," said the surgeon, without obeying the Vicar's polite hint that he wished to be left alone. "But when I have told you the tale, I think you will admit that our fates agree in this, that our happiness has been equally disregarded by those above us, who while they gratify their own selfishness, have no consideration for the feelings of any one not belonging to their own class. They regard themselves as above humanity, and such as you and I, as poor dependents, who must be grateful for the crumbs which fall from great men's tables. I was born in Winside, and I have a cat-like attachment to the place, where my parents lived, and where I was happy as a boy; moreover when I am weary, I feel that I can quit it if I please, and so am content to remain."

"And so am I now," returned Mr. Ashley,

"my ambition has long been quenched. I have learnt the folly of what men call society, and have many things to interest and amuse me. But enough of this; we ought both of us to be proud of our pursuits, and whilst we are employed in healing the souls and bodies of our fellow creatures, we may let the idle and the great go on their glittering way without envy."

"I would not exchange my life of mental labour, for one of mere pleasure hunting; no, not for the wealth of California!" said Vaughan with stern gravity.

"Miss Saville will sympathize with you in that noble resolve," returned the Vicar laughing; "she is a pattern of industry, both mental and bodily, and no doubt at this very moment, though she smiles so sweetly, she is secretly blaming my idleness; so come, my friend Harry, we will go to our books, and leave your aunt to keep Mr. Vaughan in order."

So saying, the old gentleman retired into his gaunt mansion, and left the surgeon and Miss

Saville standing on the gravel walk. The girl was picking a flower to pieces, as if lost in thought, and Mr. Vaughan, finding she did not address him, after a short pause, asked her with some embarrassment if he might be permitted to accompany her home.

"My home is only at the other side of the churchyard," she returned, "I should be sorry to take you out of your way."

"My time could not be more agreeably employed," was the reply, and he simply spoke the truth, for he felt what he said, and had not the habit of paying compliments.

He had previously heard Miss Saville's story, and when he saw her so soft, refined, and graceful, so different from what he had figured to himself that a self-dependent woman would be, he felt an eager curiosity to investigate her character more closely. If all were true, he thought, which he had heard of her, before and since her father's death, it was plain she was a union of those qualities so rarely found united in woman, a strong mind, superior intellect, admirable tem-

per, and that best of all female charms, a loving, unselfish, and devoted heart.

Circumstances had made the surgeon a great sceptic as to female perfection, so that he looked on Emma with mistrust, although involuntarily attracted towards her by something in her look and manner which he was unable to define; and when he sought to become better acquainted with her, he persuaded himself that he was only desirous of making a study of her character.


But though the proper study of mankind may be man, it is somewhat dangerous, at Mr. Vaughan's age, to include woman in the science, especially a woman so young and pretty as Emma Saville; and the surgeon, like many other men, whilst he thought he was engaged in the pursuit of philosophy and knowledge, incurred the danger of forgetting what he was about, long before he arrived at the solution of the problem he sought to resolve.

He was very apt to assert that neither passion nor feeling should interfere with the exercise of the intellect; but it is just such wise men

who are frequently the weakest when butterflies flutter across their path; and before Mr. Vaughan had handed his fair companion across the church-yard stile, he had forgotten all his resolutions to investigate her character, and was thinking that she had the prettiest foot and ankle he had ever seen in his life.

After he had left her at her own house, a very strong impression accompanied him on his walk through the village, that her eyes were inexpressibly beautiful; and all that day, even when he stood by the bedsides of his patients, the sound of a very sweet female voice, seemed to mingle with their complaints, and to soften the asperity of their murmurs.

His study of female character had begun in a very dangerous manner for himself; yet this fact never occurred to him, and he retired that night to rest, with a firm resolution to make use on the morrow of the permission Miss Savile had given him, to pay her a visit.



CHAPTER VIII.

WHILST Mr. Vaughan was thinking, much more than was consistent with the philosophy he professed, of his new acquaintance, Miss Emma Saville, that young lady was at the same time haunted by the deep and searching eyes of the surgeon.

She went about her usual avocations with a restless impatience she had never known before, and yet when she sat down to work on the following day, after little Harry had gone to the Vicarage, she felt a quiet gladness at her heart, she did not seek to account for. The truth was, she

had found a new interest in life, and as she busily plied her needle, she was thinking more of Mr. Vaughan and his promised visit, than of the task with which she was engaged.

But greatly to her disappointment, the morning passed away, without his making his appearance. At length, when the evening sun was shining pleasantly on the little garden at the back of her cottage, to Harry's great delight, she took a basket and went out with him to feed his favourite chickens. There was a fresh breeze blowing, which seemed fraught with life and gladness, and whilst Emma's little companion jumped and ran with mirth and glee, amongst the flower beds, and the bushes, she too was gladdened by his joyous laugh. Presently they stooped to lay sweet herbs before the bee-hive, which stood in a nook of the old wall.

Emma was busily arranging the plants, and Harry was watching two of the insects, which returned heavily laden with the spoils of the garden, when they were both startled by a deep

sonorous voice of some one close to them, and Emma starting up, found Mr. Vaughan standing once more at her side.

He apologised for disturbing her, and, at the same time, held out his hand. Emma placed hers within it. This was only a common English greeting, and yet it embarrassed her, and the touch of the surgeon's hand made the blood mount to her cheeks and forehead. Vaughan observed her blushes, but he was not a vain man, and attributed her agitation to timid modesty, a great charm in his eyes.

"I fear I come at an unseasonable hour," he said with a smile, which made his dark features agreeable, if not handsome, and enabled the girl to observe that he had remarkably fine teeth. "My profession must be my excuse. I have not had an hour to-day, at my own disposal, till now, and I could not wait till to-morrow, to avail myself of the privilege you had granted me."

"In Winside I trust we are beyond the dominion of etiquette," was Emma's reply, "other-

wise, I ought to apologise for my employment. But Harry and I are restless people, and the wind has given us much to do in the garden this afternoon."

"Oh I see, Miss Saville, by your bright animation that you love the breeze as much as I do," answered the surgeon warmly. "The pleasantest days for me are when the elements are all astir; when the leafy woods roll like rushing waves above my head, when the old boughs shiver and crack before its invisible might, and the blast hurries over the fields, bending grass, and reeds, and bushes, to the margin of the ruffled ponds, as it passes over them, and is gone. There is life for me in its vigour and its motion! Yes, life! for what is death—the death I daily see, but stillness—mute destruction."

"The dead are as the reeds," said Emma looking with deep earnestness at the animated face of the man who addressed her; "life, like the breeze, has passed over them, and is gone, and both pursue an unknown course."

“Yes, both unknown!” returned the surgeon with profound solemnity, “and if either return, how changed,—but no, that cannot be. The past is never restored, and yet, in all ages, men have clung to the belief, that spirits do return, to be visible on earth.”

“It is man’s nature to supply the want of knowledge, by his own vain imaginings,—is it not so?” asked Emma timidly.

“Yet, who shall presume to assert with certainty what does and does not exist,” answered Vaughan. “The whole science of electricity was a mystery a hundred years ago, and who but the Almighty can place bounds to knowledge? There may be spiritual powers, and secrets yet undiscovered by man, which, by God’s will, in times to come, may be made clear to mortal senses, as is now the earth’s rotation. The return of the soul to earth may be one day proved, though the belief in it is now regarded as superstition, or the delusion of disease, though even if possible it will doubtless ever be of rare occurrence. Since I have dwelt in this village,

I have seen many poor creatures depart from the trials of earth, like weary travellers, who are going to a better land, and I am convinced few even if they were permitted, would return."

"Yet surely many leave objects of love upon earth," answered the girl in a voice of deep sorrow; for in her own affliction it had been her chief consolation, to believe that the spirit of her father still watched and guarded her.

"I have seen mothers rejoice when their children were laid in the grave," rejoined Vaughan. "Yet they had tender hearts! Only they had no bread to give them, and were glad they were taken from the evil to come, and from the danger of suffering, as they themselves had done."

"Is this village so poor?" demanded the girl with some surprise.

"Not now," was the reply, "for trade is flourishing. But even when the workmen have large gains, they are devoid of forethought. Some may have knowledge, but it is seldom such as to induce them to provide for adversity with

resolute self denial, in the days of prosperity. The knowledge of the present day, affords no defence against the evils of luxury. It only furnishes the means of enjoying it. Where there is foolish self-indulgence and unlawful pleasure, there must be a tribute of pain."

"I wish to be of assistance to my poorer neighbours," said Emma, "and I have spoken to Mr. Ashley on the subject, but he gave me no encouragement."

"The Vicar has strange notions on some subjects," was Vaughan's reply. "But wait patiently, Miss Saville; if you wish to serve your fellow creatures, you will not long lack the opportunity. Even a word of kindness spoken in time may change the destiny of a life. You have a good work in hand already, and here is one who no doubt if he lives, will one day bless your name," and as he spoke, he looked down at little Harry, who seated on an old flower-pot, was diligently counting the cherries he had gathered.

"Oh, aunty!" he cried joyfully springing up

and holding his basket towards her, "there are more than seventy. I shall go and put those red ones on the table for tea. Mr. Vaughan must come in, to drink tea with us, and he shall have this large one, but the largest is for you! May I have this little one?"

"Yes, my child, take it," said the lady stooping down to kiss him, and to conceal the blushes which his invitation to the surgeon had occasioned.

"But Mr. Vaughan must come," persisted the boy. "Yes, indeed you must," he continued, seizing the surgeon by the hand, and dragging him towards the house. "The church clock is striking six, and six is tea time."

"If I durst ask you to give me the pleasure of your company," said Emma evidently embarrassed.

"I have asked him, and he must come," cried the boy impatiently.

Mr. Vaughan was somewhat confused, but anxious to improve his acquaintance with Miss Saville, he set all ceremony aside and frankly

accepted the invitation, which Harry compelled her to repeat.

Mr. Vaughan was almost unconsciously impelled to enter Emma's house, by a desire to see something of her domestic arrangements. In spite of his prejudice against strong minded women, he had been compelled to admit to his own heart, that Miss Saville's manners were charming, and she was modest, and gentle, and attentive to the feelings of others. But he persisted in suspecting that she must in some way fail in the duties of her sex; he now believed that it would be in house-keeping, and that the independent young lady, who presumed to live alone, must be slattern and careless in her habits.

But no sooner had he entered the little parlour, which Emma, with poor materials, had tastefully and neatly arranged, than he saw the folly of his suspicions.

No visitor had been expected, yet the tea table was set out with the nicest order; all things there looked bright, and clean, and fresh. The

hearth was swept up, the kettle singing on the fire, and even the work and books, with which Miss Saville had been previously occupied, were put aside with neatness and order. The linen was white as snow, the viands, though simple, were good, and the sweet grace with which Emma did the honours to her unexpected guest, so embellished all, that the surgeon's prejudices were entirely overcome, and he felt, though he could not utter it, that exactly in this manner should he wish to be received by his own wife.

He was at last convinced that a superior intellect, wisely cultivated, whilst it renders a woman equal to encounter, with wisdom and prudence, the most difficult trials of life, makes her also capable of adorning the humbler passages of existence, with the charms of imagination, cheerfulness, and refinement.

It was a singular power which Emma possessed, to make persons, of every age and station, alike happy in her presence. Old Mr. Ashley had recovered the cheerful vivacity of his youth

as he listened to her pleasant, cheering voice, and Mr. Vaughan, as he sat at her tea table, and experienced the elegant sweetness of her gentle courtesy, as hostess in that humble dwelling, where he had previously seen only affected vulgarity, felt, that much as he admired simplicity, it is the simplicity of refinement and goodness which gives to manners their true perfection, and that irresistible charm, which having its source in the heart, the heart alone can recognize.

The presence of little Harry sufficed to prevent the embarrassment which Emma and her visitor might have felt if alone, and the sympathy of feeling and taste they every moment more and more discovered, soon banished all reserve from their conversation.

They talked of books, and of men and manners in many parts of the world, and Emma found that Mr. Ashley had not exaggerated Mr. Vaughan's experience as a traveller, and that he was quite as ardent an admirer of the beauties of art and nature as she was.

Yet strange to say, though he appeared to talk without reserve, he never once, in all the ardour of discourse, made the slightest allusion to any former event of his life. His discourse was of places, and things, and public men, but never of himself; and though on many subjects, he spoke boldly and without reservation, there were others which he evidently approached with reluctance, and his opinions were so expressed, that it was difficult to know whether he announced his own, or only repeated what had been advanced by others.

Emma did not fail to observe, that this was peculiarly the case when any allusion was made to spiritual existences. Even in the midst of a gay conversation, at the mention of an apparition, the whole expression of his countenance changed, the light forsook his flashing eyes, and a look of restlessness and anxiety passed like a cloud over his countenance. He evidently strove to master the feeling, whatever it might be, which produced this agitation; but though he talked rapidly on other subjects, some minutes

elapsed before his voice recovered its usual tone, or his manners their careless ease.

When this occurred for the second time, Emma was not only astonished, but mistrust involuntarily flashed across her mind; but this feeling was only momentary; integrity and goodness were too strongly impressed on the countenance, and on the whole bearing of the man before her, for any suspicion of evil to attach to him on such slight grounds.

Her interest in his conversation was even heightened by this slight mystery, and the power, which from the first moment of their introduction, he had exercised over her, was redoubled that evening, by the noble independence, liberality, and justice, of all the thoughts and feelings he expressed.

It was his modesty, she persuaded herself, which made him silent as to his own history, and she felt little doubt, that when time had ripened their acquaintance into intimacy, she should one day learn it from his own lips.

As the clock struck seven, Mr. Vaughan arose

to depart, and after expressing a hope, that his hostess might not be terrified by the length of his first visit, he requested her permission to bring her a supply of books from his scanty library.

Emma thanked him with a look of pleasure, which proved that his attention was not unwelcome, but whilst she yet spoke, the door was thrown open, and her little maiden, with a candle in her hand, ushered Mr. Dillon into the room.

Emma uttered an exclamation of astonishment when she recognized him.

"Yes, my dear cousin," he replied with a sarcastic smile, "I fear I am an untimely visitor; but don't let me disturb your guest," he added, turning towards Mr. Vaughan, to whom he had already closely approached.

Short sighted as he was, he had not at first distinguished his features, but now, as their eyes met, he absolutely started. His face became pale as death, but not a word of recognition escaped his lips.

Vaughan appeared totally unmoved, but the

glance was stern, and almost fierce, with which he regarded Dillon from head to foot. He also was silent, and though he again bowed to Miss Saville, before he left the room, he did not make the slightest salutation to her guest.

When the door was closed after the surgeon, Dillon's manner underwent a sudden change. He arranged his spectacles with recovered composure, he drew a chair near the fire, stretched out his legs to their full length, admired his feet, and then laughed, a little, bitter, sarcastic laugh, which was full of meaning.

"You seem to amuse yourself tolerably well in Winside, my fair cousin," he said, as Emma calmly resumed her seat at the table, "I cannot say though, that I approve your choice of company, nor do I think your uncle is likely to do so either, should he accept the office of your guardian."

"Do you know Mr. Vaughan?" demanded Emma, without taking any notice of Dillon's implied rebuke.

"I believe I know him a little better than

most people," was the reply. "Certainly much better than I should desire you to do. We met a good deal some years ago, but our acquaintance was interrupted by unpleasant circumstances, which I cannot now explain; but I may add, that what I knew of Mr. Vaughan was not to his credit. I cannot imagine how you made such an acquaintance."

"I was introduced to him by Mr. Ashley, the Vicar, as a man in whom entire confidence might be placed," returned Emma, with a vivacity which did not escape Dillon's observation.


"That old crazy parson is truly a pretty master of the ceremonies for a young lady under age," returned Dillon, with a soft, but not pleasant smile; "so you have not lost your time, it seems, and have made acquaintance with the Vicar as well as the surgeon. You have a knack of making acquaintances, it seems, Miss Saville, and a nice set you have got into, to judge by these specimens. It was high time that I should come and look after my runaway ward, and give her a little sage advice, even if it be not accepted,

and I fail to persuade her to remove to a more suitable and respectable residence."

"Oh, give any advice you please," returned Emma cheerfully; "I will listen to every thing you have to say, though I cannot engage to act contrary to my own judgment."

"Ah! I know perfectly well I have no power," said the lawyer, with a half comic expression of affected impatience. "That was an absurd clause in the will, which permits you to reside where you choose; but when your uncle, the Baronet, returns, you may feel inclined to please him, though you set me at defiance. I must confess I was monstrously surprised when I found you had made such a quick use of your privilege, and started off, without telling me anything about your intentions; and yet more so when your letter, after travelling over half the country in search of me, informed me this morning that you had commenced housekeeping in this forlorn village."

"I knew you would oppose my plan," answered the girl quietly.



"I certainly should have done so most strenuously," was Dillon's cool reply.

"Yet I have only acted by my father's advice; and as I was resolved to fulfil his desire, I thought it best to avoid all useless discussion."

"And Major Saville, perhaps, desired that you should form a romantic intimacy with the village apothecary," said the lawyer, in his blindest tone, brushing a particle of dust off his coat sleeve whilst he spoke, and only at last casting a rapid glance at the girl.

Her countenance did not change in the least.

"It is now several years since my father left me the free choice of my acquaintance," she replied.

"Male and female!" retorted Dillon. "Very kind, no doubt, but not exceedingly prudent, if I may judge by the specimen which I found in your company on my arrival."

"If you know anything which makes Mr. Vaughan unworthy to be admitted into society," said Emma, "it would be better to disclose it at once, than to make insinuations, to which,

whilst so indefinite, no one, who has been half an hour in his society, could attach the slightest importance."

"You take this gentleman's part very warmly, my fair cousin," returned the lawyer, looking at her intently through his spectacles; "but allow me to say, that were Mr. Vaughan the impersonification of virtue, I should consider that the niece, and next heir of Sir Charles Saville, a pretty unprotected girl, who wants some weeks of twenty-one, ought to have more respect for appearances, than to drink tea, tête-à-tête, in her own house, with a village apothecary, a man of whose history she knows nothing, and whose character scarcely any man could fathom."

"So far you are right," answered the girl frankly. "I would never have invited Mr. Vaughan, and it was by a mere accident that he was my guest to-night; an accident, for which little Harry is more to blame than I am."

"I admire your candour, Miss Saville," said Dillon, in an altered tone. "Once, this occur-

rence might be accidental, but allow me to add, as your sincere friend, that twice, it would be a fault. Mr. Ashley may keep company with impunity with persons whom Miss Saville ought not to admit into her house. You have placed yourself in a critical position, and it will require, not only your virtue, but the strictest attention to appearances and decorum to carry you along unscathed. Remember, there are gossips in a village, even more bitter and eagerly malevolent, than about a court."

"Is there, then, no place free from human malice?" answered Emma sadly. "I have withdrawn from the vanities and dissipations of the world; I seek to live simply, innocently, and, if I can, usefully. Is it not even permitted by the unpaid police of society to enjoy an hour of rational conversation without incurring slander?"

"Not with a single man, unless he is your brother, or your nearest relative and guardian, like myself," returned Dillon, with mock solemnity; "and really, my dear cousin, I wish most

sincerely that your uncle would come home and take charge of you, for this strange plan of living at Winside, of all the horrid places in the world, annoys me more than I can express to you."

"Yet, you see, I have arranged myself very comfortably," said the girl, looking round with pride at her little room; "and I fully expect that this house will be my home for some time. Sir Charles Saville is not likely to object to my residing in his own parish."

"Comfortably!" repeated the lawyer, glancing round him sarcastically. "Such a paltry place is unworthy of your station, your education, and your birth; it is unworthy of yourself, if I must speak plainly. The Baronet will be enraged to find his niece in such a hovel. It is an absolute shame that a girl like you, gifted in every way to adorn society, should be buried alive in a detestable hole like this."

"I have no wish to adorn society," returned Emma, laughing. "It is a very expensive occupation, for which one gets neither profit nor

thanks. I leave it for your amusement, as you seem to value it so highly, for I do not."

"And you are resolved to remain here?"

"I told you so, I believe, in my letter."

"You did, and I therefore wrote as soon as I received it, to Sir Charles Saville."

"I had previously written to him myself," said the girl quietly.

"May I ask if you have received a reply?"

"I expect none till my uncle returns home," was the girl's rejoinder.

Dillon remained silent for a time, and appeared lost in thought.

"My dear cousin," he said at length, "you must not be offended if I say that which may not be quite agreeable to you, but as your near relative, and the trusted friend of your lamented father, I feel it is my duty to do so. Family circumstances have hitherto prevented your acquiring much experience in the class of English society to which you by birth belong, or of even being properly introduced into it; but it is highly imprudent for a young girl to set its opinions

at defiance by living alone as you do. My widowed mother, and my sister, who reside with me at Walton, about twenty miles from here, will gladly receive you, and do everything in their power to make my house an agreeable and happy home for you. Let me hope you will return with me thither to-morrow. Once under my roof, you will immediately be received by all the best company in the county; in fact, you will take the place to which your birth entitles you."

Emma laughed.

"You are very kind," she said, "and seem quite to forget that I am nearly a beggar; but I really have no desire to enter society, as the poor relative of the noblest family in the kingdom. In fact, I have a particular dislike to poor gentility, and prefer weeding my own garden to idling as a dependent amongst other men's parterres."

"But if you are determined to remain here, you must promise me not to admit that fellow Vaughan again into your company," said Dillon eagerly.

"Yet you have absolutely told me nothing against that gentleman to justify such a demand," replied the girl. "I have a shrewd suspicion that you can object to nothing but his profession, which appears to me as honourable as it is useful to his fellow creatures."

"Indeed, you mistake," answered the lawyer. "I know him to be a man very likely to presume on any foolish favour you may show him, in a way which might be very unpleasant to you and all connected with you; and I confess I should be sorry to hear the name of a cousin of mine mixed up with that of a village apothecary."

Emma smiled as she looked steadily at Dillon as he uttered this speech. She smiled at the calm self-conceit of the hackneyed man, of what is called the world, who considered all beneath him in the social scale, as creatures as much to be shunned as ticket-of-leave men, though himself ever ready to flatter and to fawn on all whom he considered above him, to be in turn despised.

"My father was wont to choose his associates by their merits, and not by their position on the great social ladder," responded the girl calmly.

"Ah! that is what all men say, who like to be surrounded by obsequious sycophants," answered Dillon, more sharply than was usual with him; "I am aware, you have had a strange education, my dear cousin, but we won't quarrel about such a worthless object as Mr. Vaughan. There is not much danger of your falling in love with such an ugly fellow, and if I have offended you, I pray you to forgive me, for though I desire you to be as perfect in other people's eyes, as you are in mine, I should detest Vaughan ten times worse than I do, were he to be the cause of dissension between you and me."

"Oh! don't be afraid; I am never displeased by advice, which is well meant," was the girl's reply; "unpleasant truths are at all times better than silent disapproval."

"I relied on your charming character for indulgence," was the lawyer's reply, "I have seen

how you spoil little Harry. But, by the way, what do you intend to do with that boy?"

"I have told you already, I consider myself his guardian," answered Emma, with gentle firmness.

"But, my dear cousin, you have not the money to send him to a decent school, and you are little aware of the inconveniences and observations, to which such a charge will inevitably expose you."

"I shall not have to incur any immediate expense for his education," was her answer, "for Mr. Ashley has undertaken to instruct him gratuitously."

"Good heavens! have you already formed so close an intimacy with the crazy old Vicar," exclaimed Dillon, sitting suddenly upright, with evident amazement and consternation. "A pretty education the boy is likely to receive from him."

"I know my father had a high opinion of Mr. Ashley's learning," answered the girl without noticing the excited manner of Dillon. "I

was therefore delighted to procure him such an instructor, and the Vicar takes a particular interest in the boy, from his likeness to some former friend of his."

"Yes, a likeness—a most remarkable likeness," muttered the lawyer, as if unconscious that he gave utterance to his thoughts. "But how comes he by that resemblance; you have never told me who were the parents of your little ward."

"They are both dead," was Emma's reply. "His father was an officer in the Indian army, who, before entering on a campaign, confided his boy to the care of Major Saville and myself. He afterwards fell in battle, and as the child had no relatives willing to befriend him, my father and I agreed to adopt and educate him."

"And his name?"

"Arnold."

"Arnold! I know no one of that name, and I think you said he had no relatives, to defray the expenses of his maintenance and education?"

"None, who are willing to do so."

"Ah, my dear cousin, this is another very imprudent affair," rejoined Dillon, with a tone of gentle disapprobation.

"Time will show," was Emma's response.

"Then you are determined to persevere in maintaining this boy, when in all probability, you will not have sufficient income to maintain yourself?"

"Decidedly. My father's wishes are still a law to me," answered the girl firmly.

"You have chosen a strange course," returned her cousin, "but what can I do? absolutely nothing, but give you my advice, and that, of course, makes you think me very disagreeable; but let me implore you to be more prudent for the future, and be assured, I have your welfare most sincerely at heart. If you get into any serious difficulty, believe me, I shall be at all times ready to assist you, and I trust, therefore, should this ever be the case, you will not fail to apply to me. It is now getting late, and I have to ride down to Cleve Court for a bed, so I must wish you good night."

Emma civilly wished Dillon good bye, but without asking him to repeat his visit. She disliked his company, she disliked his advice, more for the manner than the matter; for a proud spirit can better support the severest reproof, than the fawning blame which betrays a fear of arousing resentment, where it strives to correct.

Dillon's words, in spite of her firmness, had disturbed her, for with all her impetuosity and prompt decision of character, her strong conscientiousness made her fearful of doing anything really wrong.

CHAPTER IX.

WHEN Emma Saville was left alone by Mr. Dillon, the subject which for some time most engaged her thoughts was Mr. Vaughan. Not the slightest suspicion had been excited in her mind by the indefinite blame which had been cast on him, and conscious of her own innocent intentions, she resolved to make no change in her conduct towards her new acquaintance, in consequence of the lawyer's insinuations.

That they had formerly known each other she had little doubt, and some suspicions occurred to her mind, on further reflection, that Dillon

feared lest circumstances relating to their intercourse might come to her knowledge, probably more to his discredit than Vaughan's.

The shutters of her room had not been closed, though the night was dark and black without. The rain pattered on the panes, and the wind arising with a sudden gust, blew a shower of leaves and sand sharply against the window, so as completely to disturb the girl's reflections, and remind her that it was time to retire to rest.

She turned suddenly to close the shutters, but before she was half way to the window, she screamed with terror on suddenly beholding a man's face pressed close against the glass. In an instant it was gone.

She might have thought that her fancy had deceived her, had her view of this object been less distinct, but she had met the glance of two large eyes fixed earnestly upon her, which were not to be forgotten, and the other features, though dimly seen, and but for a second visible, were too well known for her to doubt their

reality. The apparition recalled events to her mind, unknown to all but herself, in England, and a long train of circumstances which she previously believed that death had buried for ever in oblivion.

During the lapse of many minutes, Emma continued to gaze eagerly at the window, but nothing was again visible there save the unbroken darkness which shrouded every object without. Neither did she hear the sound of retreating footsteps, and when she at length sat down by the fire-side in a strange and unusual excitement of thought and feeling, though not terrified, she was appalled.

The conversation she had recently held with Mr. Vaughan as to the mysteries of spiritual existence, the secrets beyond the grave, and the possibility of the disembodied soul returning after death to earth, recurred to her mind. She felt an involuntary awe; but deeply as she was interested in the spectre she had seen, the subject was one she could not confide to any living creature.

The face, whose eyes had looked in her eyes with a mournful expression of imploring sorrow, not readily to be obliterated from her mind, was that of a man who had been long in the grave. Her acquaintance with him had been known to her father alone, and there were many reasons why his name had never passed her lips since her return to England. He had once occasioned her much trouble and anxiety, but all that had been long at an end, and for two years she had known that he was dead and buried. Yet, though she had never doubted the fact of his decease, she could not, during the wakeful hours of that night, banish the impression from her mind that the face she had seen was the face of that man!

But though in life he might have had bitter cause of complaint against others, against her he had none. Living or dead she had no reason to fear him, yet it was near morning before she slept, and then her dreams were troubled. The dead appeared to walk once more living, by her side; she felt that she was in the power of de-

parted spirits; old terrors and old anxieties became again the events of the present, and troubles were woven around her, from which she had no power to extricate herself.

Unrefreshed, she arose at early dawn. She went out to examine if any footsteps could be discovered near her parlour window, but the gravel was dry, and hard, and level, and the wind during the night had swept away every leaf or tiny bough which had previously been scattered over it. The trees in the old churchyard were waving to and fro in the strong wind, and the tombstones were gleaming whitely in the morning sun, and as Emma gazed at them, she derided her own folly, for believing, even for an instant, that the buried dead could ever again be visible on earth.

Yet she shuddered, even whilst she thus reasoned; her heart felt chilled and oppressed, and even the mirth of little Harry at their early breakfast, failed to obliterate the recollection of the face she had seen.

When she had left the boy at the Vicarage,

and felt that she had her time for two hours at her own disposal, she resolved to seek forgetfulness of useless and unpleasant thoughts, in the active performance of a duty which she felt she had already too long postponed.

Her father had requested her to give a small sum of money to a poor woman in that neighbourhood, who was his foster-sister, and had long served in the families of his father, and his brother, Sir Charles Saville; but who, he had recently heard, was in great poverty, having incurred the displeasure of the baronet, during Major Saville's residence in India.

Emma now determined to visit this person, having already ascertained that she lived in a lone house, more than a mile from the village, whither it was difficult to go in bad weather. The roads were now likely to be dried up by the wind, and filling a little basket with provisions, and her purse with the money her father had bequeathed to his foster-sister, she set off on her walk towards the banks of the river, near which the cottage of Nanny Ainsley stood, on the

brink of a bare precipice, known all over that country by the name of the Red Cliff.

It was a dreary, and little frequented path which conducted to Nanny's cottage. After following a narrow lane between high hedges, for about half a mile, Emma crossed a stile, into a large, swampy pasture, where water lay in the furrows, and rushes, like rags, sure symptoms of neglect and poverty, in many parts grew thicker than the grass.

The wind whistled as it passed over them, and through the thorn hedges, scattering their blossoms on the ground, and when Emma at length approached the high land above the river, she had scarcely strength to resist the power of the blast, as it swept without interruption from the sea, which was not more than four miles distant.

The old stone cottage she approached was half hidden from her view by an out-house at the back, the rough stone walls of its barren garden, and two stunted, misshapen trees, which, bent and crippled by the frequent blasts, scarcely

reached the red tiled roof of the house. A rough wicket opened from the fields into a piece of much trodden ground before the door of the cottage, which, not twenty feet wide, alone divided it from a steep precipice, which descended to the river.

And far away, the stream might be traced by the winding cleft it made in the high, flat country, and the woods which covered its banks; but around Nanny's abode, for several hundred feet, all was bare, desolate, and sterile. So exposed was the spot, that it seemed marvellous, how the half ruined buildings had maintained their place, in defiance of the autumn and the winter hurricanes, which for many years had swept round them from every point of the compass.

But it seems a law of nature, in the physical as well as in the moral world, that all things poor and humble, should bid defiance to adversity, and no one in that district remembered when that cottage had been built.

And a lonely woman dwelt there, about whom

her neighbours knew as little, although she was one of their own class, and had been born amongst them.

No sooner did Emma enter the yard, than a hideous little Scotch terrier rushed out of an old barrel which served it for a kennel, and began to bark furiously at her; she hesitated to proceed, but at that moment the house door was opened, and a deformed creature, with a hump upon its back, and very short legs, clothed in a blue bed-gown and a scarlet petticoat, stood on the threshold and made a strange noise, which the dog seemed to understand, for it crept with a low growl into its kennel, whilst the female coming forward, made signs to Emma to enter the house, but uttered no articulate sound.

Emma looked at her with amazement; she had no remembrance that Nanny had such a companion when she had visited her ten years before, with her father, yet the deformed was at least fifteen years of age, though her coarse attire, by adding to the bulk of her ungainly figure, made her look older than she really was.

Emma asked her if Nanny Ainsley was at home, but the girl, whose back was towards her, made no reply, but went on into the cottage, as if she expected the lady to follow her. She was deaf and dumb.

The room was so low and dark which Emma entered, that on the first transition from the glare of day, all objects were for a few seconds invisible to her. But gradually in the rays of the fire, and a narrow stream of daylight falling from the small window, deeply set in the old stone wall, the whole poverty of the place was discernible. The floor was of trodden mud, the roof low, and intersected by rude beams, over which the boarding of an upper room was the only ceiling. No plaster covered the rugged walls, but they were white washed, and partly hidden by a high dresser, with a few white plates neatly arranged on the shelves, and by an old-fashioned bed in the form of a large oaken cupboard, which stood in a distant corner of the room. But the whole was clean and tidily arranged; the hearth was neatly swept up, a gera-

nium in full flower stood on the window seat, and a small deal table near the fire was as white as the day it was made.

Poverty was there, but not the squalid poverty found in a great metropolis, where the penniless wretch is deprived even of the treasures which Nature spreads over the earth with lavish hands, the riches of fresh air and light and verdure. Two little portraits in profile, those ghastly progenitors of photography, born of a sheet of black paper and a pair of scissors, hung in faded frames above the chimney piece. Poor as they were, a stranger might have thought them out of keeping with the place, but Emma knew that they were humble likenesses of her own father, and the only son of her uncle, Sir Charles Saville.

She saw no one except the deformed in the cottage, and believing that Nanny was probably absent, she was about to withdraw, when a soft voice from behind the sliding door of the panelled bed, asked feebly who was there, and then she saw a thin form bending forward within the

narrow opening, and looking eagerly towards her.

Better accustomed to the dim light than her visitor had been, the sick woman immediately recognised her.

"Miss Saville!" she exclaimed, "I heard you were at Winside, and I have been thinking of you all night long. It is very kind of you to come to such a poor creature as I am."

"It was my father's desire that I should bring you something in remembrance of him," answered the girl, whilst she gently took the extended hand of the sick woman.

Thin and withered, it was yet small and delicate, as if unaccustomed to rugged labour, and the refined features of the pale face which peered from the bed, bore no resemblance to those of an ordinary peasant, and had no doubt been beautiful in youth.

"Is it possible that he still remembered me?" answered the woman with a deep sigh. "I heard he was dead; but it is little use for me to grieve, for I shall soon follow him."

"How long have you been ill, Nanny?" inquired the girl.

"Ever since harvest," answered the woman. "I took cold, cutting corn, in a day of heavy rain, when I got wet to the skin."

"No wonder!" said Emma in reply, "you were never accustomed, in other days, to work out of doors."

"No more I was, dear!" answered Nanny mournfully. "I was spoilt at Cleve, for the servants there had every comfort, but it was all the worse for me; if I had worked in the fields from youth upwards, it would have done me no harm, but the change to such a rough life has been hard to bear. It is not woman's work, as your father used to say. But when women are starving, they must be glad to work like cattle, to get a bit of bread. It is a weary world for the poor!"

"We had no idea you were so badly off," returned Miss Saville. "Was there no other work to be procured, better suited to your strength?"

"Nothing in this country place," said the woman; "but don't think I wished to be idle; I always was a worker, but I was weak from youth upwards; your father used to say, my brains and my fingers were nimble enough, but my body was too weak to obey my will."

"Has my uncle done nothing for you? You were his son's nurse, and your father was long in his service."

"I offended the Baronet, when Master Frank was only a boy, Miss," replied Nanny. "And then Mr. Dillon, who can make him do what he pleases, bears a bitter enmity to me and mine, though if truth were told, we have most reason to bear him ill will."

"But what did you do to displease Sir Charles Saville?" demanded Emma, who was deeply interested in everything concerning her uncle.

"It was a foolish affair, which first brought us into disgrace," returned Nanny. "My father was gamekeeper at Cleve, and I was Master Frank's nurse, so after I left, he often

came to see me, and his great delight was to get hold of a gun, and have a shot at the sparrows. One day he came running down, all wild with pleasure, and said he had seen a covey of partridges, and must have a shot at them. He was a wilful, spoilt boy, Miss Emma, but kind, and generous, so we all loved him and gave him his way. Now the Baronet had ordered that he was never to have a gun, but my father was weak, and gave him one, and went out with him, thinking it would never be known. But when a man does wrong, secrecy is a poor shield. The first shot, the boy killed two partridges, and was wild with joy; but the second time he fired, the gun burst, and shattered one of the fingers of his left hand. The first I knew about it was, when my father brought Master Frank back to our cottage, in a dead faint. We did what we could to help him, but it could not be hid from Sir Charles, so we were sent off the next day to seek a living where we could. This is the only cottage in the neighbourhood which does not belong to the Baronet,

so here we came, but my father felt he was a disgraced man, and never looked up again, and he worked at the quarry, beside the river, till he was fairly killed by hard labour."

"And did my cousin, who was the cause of your misfortunes, not assist you, when he grew up," demanded the girl.

"Yes, heaven bless him! he sent us a little money, whenever he had any to spare," answered Nanny, wiping tears from her eyes, "but you know, Miss Saville, he was a dashing young fellow, and had need of every penny he could get, and others took pains to lead him into wild ways, and to make mischief with his father, and then he married Miss Ashley without the Baronet's consent, as you no doubt know, and got into such trouble himself, he could not be expected to think of me. And then his death followed, and so here I am, preparing to join him, and all those who were dearest to me upon earth; I loved him as well as if he had been my own child; mine was like a mother's love, and that is saying a strong thing."

"You have no child of your own?" asked Emma in a low tone.

"I never would marry, my dear young lady," answered Nanny, and her voice trembled as she spoke. "That poor dumb creature is my dead niece's child, and there is a sad story to tell there. I should feel very desolate, Miss Saville, if my hopes were not in heaven, but often when I close my eyes in this dark bed, I seem to see the dead, like angels around me, and I hope the time is not far distant, when I shall be with them in glory. I have seen your father, often since his death, though when he lived, it would have been presumption of me to think of him. But we were young together, when the heart does not understand itself. Heaven forgive me, I have no one to love now," and Nanny, hiding her face in the bed clothes, began to weep, as if her heart would break.

"My father did not forget you," said Emma, anxious to soothe her grief. "Only two days before his death he gave me this money, and said I was to take it as his farewell gift to his foster-

sister," and she put several sovereigns into the woman's hand.

"Money! is it only money!" she said, in a disappointed tone. "But, oh! Miss Saville, don't think I am ungrateful, indeed I am not; but money will pass away, and if you would kindly give me anything which had belonged to Major Saville, were it only the commonest handkerchief he had ever used, I could keep it as a treasure till I die. He was a beautiful youth, my dear young lady, whilst I was a girl of seventeen."

Nanny again began to weep. Gifted in a remarkable manner with imagination, and many of the finer faculties, which are rarely developed in persons of her station, they had found nurture in the family of Saville, where, being the Major's foster-sister, she had been early taken into service; as she afterwards gazed backwards on the habits and companions of her youth, from the rough pathway of her later life, she seemed to perceive beautiful glimpses of a former state of existence, from which she was day by day travel-

ling more rapidly, through a cold, dark, and desolate region, where nothing was visible but the grave. The superior faculties and delicacy of mind, which might have invested her life with a thousand charms, had she been born in a superior class, had aggravated the hardships and deprivations of her humble lot.

Emma knew her character well, for her father had frequently spoken of his foster-sister with pity and respect, and touched by her grief, the lady took a little locket from her own neck, and putting it into her hand, telling her, whilst tears filled her eyes, that it contained a lock of Major Saville's hair.

"God bless you, Nanny," she said, "for the tears you shed for him that is gone. You are the first person who has shared my sorrow. You knew him as well as I did, and understood his noble generous character, which little souls could not appreciate."

Nanny made no reply, but she kissed the locket, and pressed with gratitude the hand of Emma. Though the stations of these two

women were very different in the estimation of the world, deep feeling made them equals then, and each felt that she had found a friend.

There was a brief silence, which was suddenly broken by the sound of heavy footsteps on the boards of the loft above. A look of perplexed anxiety came over Nanny's face when she heard it, and she made rapid signs to the dumb girl, who apparently understanding her wishes, quickly left the kitchen.

"Don't be alarmed, Miss Saville," she said; "the girl will prevent any one coming here whilst you are with me. Some of the farmer's people are getting corn from the loft, for I have let it for a trifle."

Yet Nanny listened with evident perturbation a few moments longer, and when all was still she seemed at ease, and again addressed Miss Saville.

"Is it true, my dear young lady," she said, "that you have come to live at Winside? It is a poor place for one like you."

"Yes, I have taken a house there," was the

reply. "I am not rich, Nanny, and I must live in accordance with my fortune."

"But your uncle will surely never allow you to remain in such a place," rejoined Nanny.

"He is abroad, and may perhaps decline to act as my guardian. I have then no other relatives but the Dillons from whom I can expect assistance."

"Don't depend upon them!" cried the sick woman, half starting up, and her eyes flashing almost fiercely. "Dillon is a dangerous friend. Poor master Frank would never have been half so wild but for Dillon. We servants knew that, though the Baronet never suspected him, for he can flatter cunning. When Mr. Frank married, and got wrong altogether, Mr. Dillon's name was mixed up with the whole story, though no one knew exactly what he had to do in it. But he was the friend of all parties at the same time, so there must have been double dealing, and no good can ever come of that; only I know this, Mr. Dillon is gay and prosperous, and your poor cousin is gone for ever. Don't trust that

man, Miss Saville; whatever you do, don't trust that man. Don't be persuaded to marry him, my dear young lady, if your life should seem to depend on it; he despises all women, except such women as his own sister."

"And in what way does she command his respect?" asked Emma, whose curiosity was aroused by Nanny's strange discourse.

"She is very handsome," answered the sick woman, "a gentleman's beauty, and not more than eight and twenty, and though Dillon is deep and designing, she can get round him as well as other men by her caprices and her flattery."

"You don't seem to have a very high idea of my relations," said Emma quietly.

"If you knew your cousin Saville's story as well as I do," was the reply; "if you had seen that fine, joyous fellow broken down by sorrow and care, all by their intrigues, you would not like them either. But I only say, take care, for you stand just as Mr. Frank did, between Dillon and Sir Charles Saville's estates."

Emma started. This idea had never occurred to her mind, and inexperienced as she was in the ordinary affairs of life, she shrunk from supposing that money was the guiding compass of most men's course.

"If Mr. Frank's son had been forthcoming, it would have been different. It was said to have died soon after the mother, but others believe it is yet alive, but as Sir Charles had discarded his son and his wife, he made no enquiries about their child, poor unfortunate infant."

Nanny lay back in her bed whilst she thus spoke, so that a shadow fell upon her face, but Emma was struck by the peculiar tone of her voice.

"There is then no heir to the name of Saville?" said the girl.

"No, Miss, after Mr. Frank there is no one," answered Nanny, suddenly sitting up in her bed, and leaning forward, so that the light fell full upon her excited features. "Mr. Frank dead, you are the last of your race, and so am

I, except for the dumb cripple. A poor woman and a rich one—a race of gentry and a race of labourers! But they have both had their trials, the proud and the humble. They have both sinned—aye, both!—and when they stand before the Judgment Seat, they will be all equal. Oh, death would be a blessing to the worst of us, if there was no fear of a hereafter!”

“But a harmless woman like you, Nanny, need have no fear of death,” said the girl kindly.

“Harmless!” she echoed; “yes, harmless for anything you know, Miss Saville, but my weakness or my folly is no concern of yours. You are young and innocent, and God grant, for your father’s sake, that when you lie upon the bed of death, you may be able to look beyond the grave without terror.”

Nanny sunk back on her pillow when she had uttered these words, and nothing more was to be heard in the cottage for several minutes, except the hum of the spinning wheel, which the dumb girl was busily turning near the fire, and

a strange noise, by which she from time to time signified her satisfaction.

"I don't wonder you are sad," said Emma, addressing the sick woman after she had surveyed the spinner for a brief space, "your spirits must give way if you see no one but that poor creature."

"She is faithful as a dog," was Nanny's reply, "and though not wise, is very good. I sometimes think, as I lie here in my bed, and look at her, that sense and education are little worth, when goodness is wanting. They only teach people to help themselves on in the world, and sometimes not even that. My poor dumb niece is good and contented with her hard lot, and God surely loves her better than such as I, who have been murmuring in my heart at the ways of Providence all my life. Oh! content is a blessed thing, for rich or poor. If you ever have children, Miss Saville, teach them that, and teach them, before all things, to be good, and kind, and true."

Emma's eyes filled with tears, as she pressed

Nanny's hand in reply. She too, knew the unhappiness of a murmuring spirit, and had struggled by industry and reason to put it to rest. She, too, had felt the longing for affection, and a brighter state than the world can ever bestow, too often the penalty paid for the possession of imagination and strong feelings.

"But surely," she said at length, "some neighbour comes to visit you at times, some one who can hear and answer you?"

"Very seldom, my dear young lady," was the woman's answer, "I never sought my neighbours, and we don't suit, somehow. Since the dumb girl came to me, they seem afraid of us. But Mr. Ashley calls now and then, and the village doctor has been very kind to me."

"What, do you mean Mr. Vaughan?" demanded Emma, blushing to her own dismay.

"Yes, miss, you know him, no doubt, but you have been too short a time in this neighbourhood to understand his goodness."

"I am glad you have medical aid," was all the girl could reply.

"Yes," rejoined Nanny, "Mr. Ashley sent the gentleman the first time, but he has been often here since, and he has done my mind as much good as my body, for I can talk to him as I could not talk to the Vicar. He seems to feel no difference between rich and poor; I believe he could understand the thoughts of every human being. Oh, that Mr. Vaughan has a grand soul, full of love, Miss Saville, full of holy love, which makes all men brethren!"

"And he gives you hopes of speedy recovery?" demanded Emma, with a tremulous voice, whilst she thought how differently Mr. Dillon and Nanny spoke of the same person.

"Oh, yes, he won't let me despair," was the reply; "I am to be up this afternoon, and get into the fresh air as soon as I can."

"The wind is strong to day," said the girl.

"Yes, but to-morrow, if the sun shines, I will try to sit on a bench before my own door, and it is a month since I saw the sky or the green grass fields."

"And pleasant sights they are at all times,"

said a man, who having quietly opened the door, was now standing on the threshold.

It was the pedlar, Robin Charlton; no sooner did he recognize Miss Saville, than he entered, with many apologies, and set down his basket on the table.

The dumb girl followed him with sounds of delight, and eagerly watched him as he unfastened the covering of his wares.

“Well, Nanny, my good woman,” he said, “how are you to day? still in bed, and talking of sunshine that is to come, eh? Well, well, it will come for us all some day or another, I suppose. Better? that’s well, and I am glad to see you here, Miss Saville! that is as it ought to be, for Nanny wants comfort. She cannot get out as I do, amongst the winds, and the trees, and the fields, to soothe her restless spirit. Though I’m the happiest fellow alive now, I believe I should pine as she does if I was cooped up in a cupboard like her, or worse than that, shut up with half a thousand beggars in a Bastile of a workhouse. It is men, and men’s passions that

make them miserable; but nature teaches them to know God and be content."

"You have been a long journey since you deserted me so suddenly, I suppose, Robin," said Miss Saville, now rising from her chair, "I thought you had forgotten me, since I am alone."

"No, no, my dear, I never forget old friends," returned the pedlar; "but I have had business in hand. I am right glad to hear you have come to Winside, and I suppose you know your uncle is expected very shortly at Cleve Court."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Emma.

"Yes; some say he is to arrive to-night, and Mrs. and Miss Dillon are there already, making themselves very busy, though nobody wants them. As Captain Saville would not marry her, before he took Miss Ashley, she is trying what she can do with the old gentleman, his father."

"Oh, Robin!" exclaimed Emma, "Sir Charles must be nearly forty years older than she is."

"No matter for that; though relations, they are not within the forbidden degrees, and she is one of those girls—there are plenty of them, I can tell you—who would marry old Parr, if he was alive, and had a handsome establishment. Take a lesson, Miss Emma, and get hold of some old Lord, and then when you are rich you can pension me off in my old age. You are going," he continued, when he saw Miss Saville shaking hands with Nanny, "but I'll come and see you to-morrow, for no doubt you'll soon be going to Cleve, now Sir Charles is come home, and then you'll be such a grand lady, that a poor fellow like me, will hardly get a sight of you. But God keep you, wherever you are; and be on your guard against the Dillons," he whispered, as she passed the threshold on to the narrow terrace before the cottage.

She thanked him with a kind greeting, and went to the little gate, which the dumb girl was holding open for her, making rapid curtsies one after another, with a broad grin on her good-humoured face, and the curtsies and the grins

were re-doubled when the lady put a small piece of money into her hand.

The wind was still blowing wildly, and to avoid meeting it on the open fields, Emma, after a moment's hesitation, decided to descend by a steep path, which wound down the face of the cliff, at a little distance from the cottage door, to the brink of the river, and following its course, ended at the foot of the village. But before she reached it her dress was seized by a strong arm, so as to hold her back, and when startled by this unexpected interruption, she turned round with some degree of alarm, she saw with amazement that it was the dumb girl who had arrested her course, and was now making wild signs and gesticulations for her to turn into the path across the fields.

It was vain to ask for an explanation, and when Emma endeavoured by signs to express her desire to pursue the way she had chosen, the girl shook her head with wild eagerness, and placed herself with dogged obstinacy in such a

manner across the head of the descent, that no one could pass her.

Emma at length, supposing that there might be some danger in descending the cliffs, which the girl was anxious she should avoid, soon ceased to oppose her, and returned to the path by which she had come to the cottage. She had not proceeded far when she saw the girl dancing about on the turf, and clapping her hands with grotesque signs of merriment and exultation. She then suddenly disappeared down the precipice, which she had forbidden Emma to descend. There was something strange and unaccountable in the whole proceeding, which strongly excited the lady's curiosity.

When she reached the summit of a slight ascent, she paused behind a clump of furze, which entirely concealed her, to watch for a minute or two, for the girl's return. She then first remembered the heavy footsteps she had heard whilst in the cottage, and the girl's departure in obedience to the signs made by Nanny. Only a few seconds now elapsed till she saw the

head of this strange being rise above the cliff higher and higher. Presently she stood on the summit, gazing eagerly on every side of her, to ascertain, as it appeared, if Emma was out of sight. Seeing no one, she turned, after her scrutiny, again towards the path she had ascended, and began waving her arm, and making other signs for some one below to come to her.

She was speedily obeyed, and to Emma's increased astonishment, in a few seconds a man sprang up with the agility of a fawn beside her, and both ran off at full speed to Nanny's cottage.

Miss Saville was so far distant, that she could only see that the stranger was a tall man, so disguised by having his hat drawn down over his face, and a large shepherd's plaid wrapped round him, that it was impossible to guess his age or personal appearance. She saw the door closed upon the man and girl, and when five minutes had elapsed without their again making their appearance, she resumed her walk to the village.

Emma could not doubt for an instant, that the dumb girl had been sent to prevent her meeting the stranger, and his visit, it was therefore manifest, was not unexpected. Again and again she wondered if Nanny had spoken truly, when she talked of her long solitude, or if all had been falsehood, the better to conceal some evil, or nefarious practices. But then again she called to mind, the high estimation in which her father had held this woman, and bitterly reproached herself for her suspicions. Added to this, the presence of Robin Charlton at Red Cliff, a man whom she knew to be the personification of integrity was a pledge, that the mystery whatever it might be, was not dishonest.

When she had come to this conclusion, her mind was at rest. If Nanny was honest, she felt she had no right to meddle with, or pry into her affairs.

CHAPTER X.

As Emma passed on towards the village, she found with pleasure that the wind had already greatly abated, and the clouds being at length broken, gleams of sunshine seemed, from time to time, to float over the growing corn and the meadows, where the spring flowers were scantily opening, and over the young hay, which already in some thick tufts, gave shelter to the nest of the lark, which sang above it, as it soared into the sky.

The girl was soothed and gladdened by the sights and sounds of nature, and she fully ap-

preciated Robin's wisdom, in avoiding the haunts of man. Yet she sighed, for she knew that the fruition of the best human affections, is even a higher enjoyment than any which inanimate nature can bestow. We must love our neighbour as ourself; in that alone is perfect happiness, and the truth of this reflection was forcibly exemplified, when she heard the merry laugh of little Harry, as he came bounding with open arms towards her, from the Vicar's garden.

"Grandpapa ———, he says I am to call him grandpapa," cried the little boy, as he rushed into her arms; "my dear grandpapa says, you are to come into the garden, aunty. He wants to give you a lecture, he says. Is not that funny?"

"Yes, my dear young lady," said Mr. Ashley, now himself appearing, and drawing the girl's arm through his, "I must take the liberty of telling you, I don't approve of your long walks about the country, without proper protection."

"But surely there is no danger of my meeting

banditti, in this peaceable district," said the girl laughing, incredulously.

"Since the railway was begun, there are often people not much better lounging about our lanes," returned the old gentleman. "Whilst I was down with Harry, fishing at the river, half an hour ago, I saw you on the Red Hill Cliff, close to Nanny Ainsley's cottage, and that is a place which has no good repute in the village."

"I have been to see Nanny herself," was Emma's reply, "I have known her from a child, and she is surely honest?"

The Vicar rubbed his forehead, so as to cover his face with his hand, but he made no reply for more than a minute. "I don't always trust those the most, who are the fairest spoken," he then said; "had this woman any visitor, whilst you were with her?"

"Only the Pedlar, Robin Charlton."

"And a younger man in a plaid was there not?" demanded the Vicar, fixing his eyes keenly on Emma's face as he spoke.

She looked up. Mr. Vaughan was standing

opposite to her, watching her not less keenly. The blood suffused her cheeks, but she answered in a quiet, steady voice, "I saw such a person come up the Cliff, after I left the cottage and was at some distance from it."

"And you did not know him?" demanded Mr. Ashley.

Vaughan, who had silently saluted her, now looked at her, in a way which made her heart beat violently.

"What should I know of him? I scarcely saw him as I stood at the top of the hill," she said gravely, for she was thinking of her own previous suspicions; then laughing gaily, as if a new thought had struck her, she added, "but why do you question me so strictly? You surely don't suppose that I have been keeping an assignation at Nanny Ainsley's?"

"No, my child," answered the Vicar; "I know you already too well to have such a suspicion, but from another part of the banks I saw a man hiding amongst the bushes whilst you were at the cottage, and presently dumb Nelly

came and made signs to him, and he darted up the rocks as rapidly as if he heard a constable after him. I could not see for the bushes whether he went to the cottage or not, but I suppose he did, and from what you have told us I fear that the evil reports about Nanny are not without foundation."

"Pardon me, Mr. Ashley, if I differ from you," said Vaughan, here interposing. "I have visited this woman frequently since you first took me there, a month ago, and I have never seen a living creature, except the dumb girl, at her cottage. She is sick, and I have studied not only her ailments but her character, and have with reason conceived a high esteem for her."

"Very romantic, my dear sir," returned the Vicar, somewhat impatiently; "but allow me to say, you cannot know these people as well as I do. When you have been amongst them forty years you will not believe that ignorance is innocence."

"But Nanny is not ignorant," rejoined the

surgeon. "She is a woman remarkably endowed, and refined beyond her station; one who has thought and felt much."

"So much the worse for her," said Mr. Ashley. "She had better have weeded the fields than have talked sentiment with wild young gentlemen, and have encouraged them to destroy the peace of other people's families. When women get above their own class they are sure to become either ridiculous or mischievous. I have sad suspicions too that she has something even more serious to answer for, but there is not evidence sufficient against her for me to make a positive accusation."

"My dear sir," said Mr. Vaughan, earnestly, "you speak in a bitter spirit, so unlike your usual philosophical indulgence for the frailties of human nature, that I suppose you know more to Nanny's disadvantage than your charity permits you to disclose."

"I can say nothing more," was the quick reply. "I don't desire to prejudice any one against her; but as a friend of Miss Saville I

disapprove of her returning to the house of a woman of whose honesty and integrity there exists the smallest doubt."

"I will go down to the Red Cliff myself this very day, and have the matter explained," said Vaughan, quietly. "Perhaps, Miss Saville, you will allow me to repeat to you in the evening any thing I may learn?"

To this request Emma silently assented, though not without thinking of Dillon's caution, which gave a constraint to her words and manner which troubled Vaughan, and he left the Vicar's garden with a heavier heart than he had entered it. Even little Harry, who ran prattling after him, could not provoke him to a smile.

"That is a fine fellow," said Mr. Ashley, as soon as he was out of hearing. "A little too romantic, trusting too much in the goodness of human nature, for though I believe he has already had some severe lessons, his benevolence is an inexhaustible fountain of hope and trust. He measures humanity too much by the powers and goodness of his own nature, and has not yet

learnt that virtue is only one quality of the mind, destined to hold perpetual war with many others. Miss Saville, have you read Rousseau? He is my favourite author."

"Rather a strange taste for a clergyman, is it not, my dear sir?" rejoined Emma, with a smile.

"Perhaps so," said the Vicar; "in fact, no clergyman looking for preferment would dare to make such a confession; but I adore his genius, his eloquence! Where can you find such language? Though his first principle was false, and man in a savage state was never perfect, he was the first writer who saw society without conventional feeling, and understood that the Europeans, as much as the Chinese, are the mere creatures of habit. All great reformers since his time have only put his thoughts in action. And yet with all his genius he was only a personification of human frailty, divided between vice and virtue; the love of God was not strong enough in his heart to bear him above the temptations, and the torments of passion."

"But may not goodness exist without genius?" demanded Emma.

"To a certain degree," returned Mr. Ashley, "it is, however, my favourite doctrine, that great goodness, can alone be developed by great intellect, whilst intellect can exist in the highest degree without goodness. In this I differ from Vaughan, and all such sanguine reformers, who think that education is to eradicate the vices of human nature; but certainly, the education given now in our village schools is all humbug. Moral training there is none, and the religion taught, is church doctrine, which no child can understand or profit by. If even the highest intellectual culture is inefficient to reform the upper classes, what is to be expected from such a worthless misapplication of youths' most precious hours? Absolutely nothing but disgust!"

"You never go to the village school, my dear Sir," said the girl; "might not your influence there produce some amendment in the present style of teaching?"

"My dear young lady, if I were to attempt to

put my ideas in practice there, all the old women in the parish would write to inform the bishop that the church was in danger. Beside, I am too old and too idle, to begin to do battle against the prejudices of the multitude. If the nation is determined to have as few schools as possible, and that in those schools, the smallest possible quantity of really beneficial instruction shall be given, the nation must just take the consequences. I don't wish to incur persecution."

"There can be no danger of your incurring that in this enlightened country," replied the girl.

"I have been taught the contrary," said Mr. Ashley. "When I formerly conscientiously omitted three words in reading the Church service, my own curate, a young gentleman from Oxford, and all the wealthy supporters of ancient forms in the parish, got up a complaint to the Bishop against me, as if I was actually endangering the salvation of their souls. What could I do after that? What can a timid old man do against a whole parish of blockheads, whom pre-

judice makes arrogant and strong? I resolved for the future, to think as I pleased but to say nothing about it. It is the only way to live peaceably where hypocrites make a profit of cant."

"But Mr. Vaughan speaks and acts without any disguise," observed Emma.

"Ah, that is another matter; Vaughan's doctrines flatter mankind, mine don't. He believes in progress, and civilization, and such things, I don't. He wants to make all men wise and virtuous, and I know the majority are fools, and will always remain so; and when Rousseau praised man in his savage state, I believe he wrote against his own convictions, merely to have an opportunity of abusing the existing society of France. But I shall tire you with my philosophy, Miss Saville; better live well, than talk well, is the wisest adage I know, though often forgotten, at the present day."

"I am sorry to leave you," returned Emma, "but Harry is impatient, and I have several things to attend to at home."

Mr. Ashley accompanied them through the churchyard, and as they sauntered along, Emma told the Vicar of her uncle's expected return to Cleve.

"And should he request you to reside with him, what do you intend to do?" demanded the Vicar.

"As I have received no answer to my letter, I have not thought it possible that he would do so," answered the girl.

"Ah, well, we shall see; but remember, should any change occur, which may make you feel little Harry in your way, you must send him to me. No thanks, I have taken a fancy to the boy; I am lonely and forsaken, and you could not do me a greater kindness, than to bestow on me such a merry companion."

"I cannot express my gratitude," answered Emma, as she returned the Vicar's friendly shake of the hand, "but I should regret any alteration which could divide me from my dear little ward. He is all I have left to love."

"Your heart may change, as well as your

fortune, my dear young lady," said Mr. Ashley, turning up his large eyes with a droll expression, to her blushing face.

"Never to him, my own dear little Harry!" cried the girl, half reproachfully, and stretching out her arms, the boy jumped down from a gate he had mounted, and ran laughing to kiss his aunty, as he called her.

An expression of deep sorrow clouded the old Vicar's face, as he looked on these bright and happy creatures; one still totally unconscious of the trials of life, the other just entering, hopeful and strong in the faith of happiness on the tangled passages of the passionate and active existence, from whence the wayfarer seldom emerges without wounds and bitter anguish, which are rarely healed on earth.

He too had known the hope and the disappointment, and had shrunk back from the cold world's indifference, to commune in solitude, through the medium of books, with the mighty spirits, whose thoughts were harmonious with his own. But though study amused his intellect, it

afforded no solace to his heart. Little Harry had given him more comfort, by his childish love, than he had ever derived from all the wisdom of the philosophers.

As soon as he foresaw a probability of Emma's removing to Cleve, he had begun to devise a plan for him to retain the boy as his pupil. Timid in action, he had consulted Mr. Vaughan on the subject, and heard with pleasure, that his ideas corresponded with his own.

In this way the surgeon had first learnt, with dismay, that there was a possibility of Miss Saville's shortly leaving Winside, and resuming her place, in the circle in which her birth entitled her to move. This ill news, combined with the unusual coldness of Emma's manner, of which she was herself unconscious, filled Vaughan with melancholy forebodings, as he pursued his daily avocation in the village. His heart was not in his work.

Some poets have described the beginning of love, as a period of intense delight. It may be so to the inexperienced, who are ignorant

of the nature of their own feelings, or to the sanguine, who have no doubt of success; but the surgeon had already experienced disappointment, and was neither sanguine nor vain. His passion for Miss Saville, so newly and suddenly excited, filled him with anxiety. He was even angry at his own weakness, in allowing himself to be constantly engaged by thoughts of a girl, of whom he knew so little, so as to interfere with the ordinary occupations of his mind. But he could not banish her image from his eyes; he could not hush the voice, which rang for ever in his ears; nor could he put away a strange feeling of interest and curiosity, in everything which regarded this young, fair, and unprotected creature.

His ardent imagination had found a fit subject for the exercise of all its powers, and it was in vain, that he strove to put it to rest, by engaging in the affairs of life.

Half maddened by the desire to be again in Emma's presence, he listened with distraction to the complaints of his patients. The

only house to which he bent his steps with pleasure, was the cottage of Nanny Ainsley. There he felt sure that he should hear Emma spoken of, and though he did not attach any idea of impropriety, to the girl's visit to the Red Cliff, he felt some desire that the presence of the mysterious stranger at the cottage, should be explained.

He was aware of his own weakness; he was painfully conscious that he had scarcely begun to love, till fears and doubts entered his mind, for a most trivial cause.

To assure his own tranquillity, it was necessary that the slightest mystery attached to Miss Saville, should at once be cleared up, and though the shades of evening were rapidly closing over the landscape when, his professional duties being fulfilled, he was at liberty to proceed to Nanny's cottage, he set off there without returning home to dine, as was his custom at that hour.

It was quite dark, and the rain was falling heavily, before he reached the Red Cliff, but the dog, who knew his footsteps, gave no signal of

alarm. It appeared to him somewhat strange that not a gleam of light pierced through the closed shutters of the kitchen, though he distinctly heard the murmur of voices. He knocked at the door; no immediate answer was returned. He lifted the latch, and he found, for the first time, that the bolt was drawn within.

He paused to listen, and distinctly heard that his visit, unexpected at that hour, had caused a bustle and agitation in the cottage, and a whispering and a rustling were audible for several minutes, before the bolts were cautiously and slowly pulled back.

"Who is there, I should like to know?" asked a tall old man who peered out of the half open door, and whom Vaughan immediately recognised by his voice to be Robin Charlton.

"The village doctor, against whom no man bars the door," was the reply.

"I beg your pardon humbly, sir," said the pedlar, with profound respect, at the same time standing aside, so as to allow Vaughan to enter.

"We only barred the door as a matter of caution this stormy night, and not against a benefactor and a friend. Step out of the rain, sir, do; you will find Nanny much better, since she has hoped to be able to get out again into the sunshine."

Vaughan did not hesitate to accept this invitation, and advanced into the cottage, looking around with considerable curiosity to ascertain if there was anything to account for the bustle he had heard.

Nanny sat on one side of the fire, in a high-backed wooden chair, propped up with the pillows of her bed. The lustre of her large and hollow eyes was heightened by a crimson glow of fever on her cheeks, and though she sat very still, there was a remarkable expression of anxiety on her usually languid features. The dumb girl was not as usual at her spinning wheel, but busy wiping down a deal table, to remove the traces of a recent meal, and after she had nodded at the surgeon, she turned round and looked towards the bed, and with a broad

grin made one or two extraordinary grimaces, but Vaughan observed that a quick sign from her aunt instantly restored her gravity.

There was no light in the kitchen but that of the fire, which spread a warm glow over the figures gathered round it, and the plates on the old dresser, but left all distant corners and recesses in profound shadow. Vaughan did not fail to observe that a vacant chair stood by Nanny's side, and a short pipe, of finer workmanship than those commonly used by the peasantry, lay on the pot lid beside the fire. There was also an odour of the finest and most delicate tobacco in the room.

"I fear I disturb you," said the surgeon, as he took the vacant chair, "I have frightened your visitor away, it seems," he added, and as he glanced around him, he fancied he saw something moving in the obscurity behind the bed.

Robin probably did the same, for he went thither, and opening a back door, which led to an adjoining shed, pretended to look out, as if to see if any one was there, but though nothing

could be distinguished, Vaughan was convinced that this was only a pretence to let some one out who had, since his arrival, been hidden behind the bed.

In the meantime, Nanny talked fast to engage his attention, but whilst she denied that any visitor had been there that evening, her lips became deadly pale, and her hands trembled, as she adjusted the red cloak she had wrapped around her.

The dumb girl seemed highly amused, and with strange grimaces again laughed and pointed to the bed. Robin, when he returned to the fireside, took her by the shoulder with a stern look, and grasped her so hard that she gave a cry of pain as she extricated herself from his fingers. But he did not appear to hear her, and when the surgeon, in answer to Nanny's denial of any one having been that night in the cottage, said that he thought he had heard a stranger's voice as he stood before the door, the pedlar coolly replied that he had been talking rather loud just before they heard his knock.

"And you were smoking too, I suppose," returned Vaughan, "pray don't let me interrupt you. I have seldom smelt finer tobacco."

"Aye, it is something remarkable," answered the old man, while a number of small lines radiated like the twinkle of little stars, from the corners of his laughing eyes. He seemed to have a jest of his own, which no one else understood. The surgeon, on the contrary, looked very grave.

"Yes, very remarkable," he returned. "And the pipe is not less so," he added, pointing to the small Dutch clay pipe, which lay on the pot top.

Though Nanny hid her face with her hand, Vaughan observed that she moved uneasily on her chair whilst he thus spoke, but Robin was as tranquil as before.

"Yes," he said, "when I was down at the seaside, a cousin of mine, who is a ship captain, and lately come from Holland, gave me that pipe and tobacco in return for a little whiskey I brought him down from the hills. Perhaps the one had paid no more duty than the

other, but I did not think it worth my while to enquire, and I am sure you won't either, sir. We poor creatures have need of a little comfort now and then, which we cannot always legally pay for."

Vaughan smiled; he knew that he was not listening to the truth, but he was amused by the cunning ingenuity with which the old man defended Nanny's secret. But still, he did not relinquish his purpose.

"I was told that a man had been seen to enter this cottage to-day, about noon," he said.

"It must have been me, sir," returned the pedlar, with a quiet effrontery, which did not deceive his listener, who was now more than ever convinced of the existence of a mystery, which both Robin and the woman, were determined not to disclose.

"You are a wonderful fellow, Charlton, I admit," said the surgeon, with a smile of incredulity, "yet I must confess, I did not give you credit for so much agility as this person displayed."

"*Agility!* that is a hard word I don't exactly understand," answered the old man, now coolly filling the Dutch pipe from his tobacco pouch, the contents of which were certainly not of the finest quality.

"Better say at once that neither of you choose to gratify my curiosity," replied the surgeon, looking at Nanny, whose confusion was not to be concealed; "and I frankly admit that I have no right to intrude on any one's secrets; so let me feel your pulse, my good woman, and hear how you are getting on."

Nanny, in reply, said that she was much better; but when Mr. Vaughan, evidently against her will, pressed his finger on her wrist her pulse betrayed a high state of excitement and nervous agitation.

"Nanny, Nanny; what has happened?" he said, looking intently in her face.

"Nothing, sir," she returned, but her eyes sunk beneath his gaze, and a slight shudder passed over her whole frame.

The surgeon shook his head.

"I shall order you no medicine," he said. "Here is something beyond the reach of drugs."

Nanny began to play with the fringe of her old shawl without uttering a word. Suddenly she started and listened. Vaughan fancied he heard footsteps in the adjoining shed, a door softly close, and then all was again still. The woman heaved a deep sigh, as if a load had been removed from her heart.

Vaughan rose to depart, and then Nanny, as if suddenly anxious to detain him, began to talk eagerly, whilst Robin, pretending to look for something in his basket, stood so as to intercept his passage to the door.

"You are in a mighty hurry to go, sir," he said, when the surgeon asked him to stand aside, "you have come a long way in bad weather; you had better stay a while till the moon gets up, for it is awfully dark, and the rain is coming down in torrents."

"Thank you," returned Vaughan, endeavouring to pass him, "I am used to all weathers,

and have provided against darkness, for I have a little lantern in my pocket."

"Light it then, sir; light it by all means, before you go out, for the road in places runs near the cliff, and it is dangerous enough by day, when a man has his senses about him, but I would not go it in a dark night, for love or money."

"Let me light it for you, sir," said Nanny, arising, and holding out her hand for the small pocket lantern, which Mr. Vaughan had now produced.

He gave it her in silence, and as she bent down to the fire with a match, he saw a man's glove fall from the folds of her dress to the floor.

The pedlar's quick eye saw it too, though the woman herself did not observe it.

"Nanny, woman," he said, "you've dropped your glove; I declare it's one of them old ones of Mr. Cranbourn's, I brought you two years ago. But you are no great wearer of gloves, and they last you long."

This flood of words gave Nanny time to think;

at the first sight of the glove in Robin's hand, she had turned so fearfully pale, and her countenance had betrayed such sudden terror, that the surgeon grasped her arm, lest she should fall to the ground. But she was calmer when Robin ceased speaking, and smiled as she took the glove from him; a large, man's glove, little suited to her small and wasted hand.

Several minutes had now elapsed, and the lantern burning bright, Robin could devise no further excuse for detaining Mr. Vaughan, whatever might be his reason for wishing to do so. He, therefore, opened the cottage door, and looked out into the night, which was indeed tremendous.

The wind, which had been high all day, had increased to a tempest at sunset, and now came sweeping up from the sea, with dismal howling, bearing low, black clouds before it, which were bursting as they went in torrents of rain, over hill and dale.

Nothing dismayed, Vaughan buttoned up his waterproof coat closely around him, tied his hat

firmly on his head, and having wished the party in the cottage good night, sallied forth into the storm.

He carried a thick bludgeon in one hand, and his lantern in the other. He passed along the narrow yard, and through the little gate which enclosed it, but when he reached the corner of the cottage, and faced the wind, it appeared for a moment, as if even his athletic form would be unable to resist the mighty, though invisible force with which he had to contend.

He felt at once that he must get close to the walls of the cottage and the adjacent out-houses till, having passed them it was possible that the current might be less strong on the open ground. He returned, therefore, under the shelter of an old stone fence, to the gable end of the house, and proceeding rapidly along, turned afterwards into an angle formed by a shed in the rear of the cottage, from whence a door opened into it.

Vaughan raised up his lantern as he turned the corner, to ascertain the best way to proceed,

and to his amazement, its light fell upon the figure of a man, who, with his head leaning against the door, seemed listening eagerly to what was passing within. The instant the light of the lantern made this person aware of the surgeon's proximity, he vanished like a shadow into the darkness.

Yet before he fled, Vaughan had distinctly seen a face, once well known, and never to be forgotten, for its image was indelibly engraved on his memory by a combination of circumstances, the saddest, and most extraordinary he had ever experienced in life.

He had seen the figure of a man, plainly and palpably before him, and yet he knew that man had been dead nearly six years. Vaughan possessed a strong mind and a quiet conscience, and yet, as he stood there alone, with the fierce night wind howling wildly around, and neither star, nor moon to be seen through the murky darkness of the pouring rain, he was awed—almost appalled by the unaccountable apparition he had beheld. But no sooner had he regained

the mastery of his faculties, than his first thought was to follow the figure.

From the inhabitants of the cottage he had already experienced that there was nothing to be learnt, and the form he had seen, whether living, or but a shadow of the dead, had already vanished, and was, in all probability, far beyond the risk of discovery.

Vaughan was superstitious; it was perhaps the only weakness of his powerful, imaginative, and highly cultivated mind. As some people listen to music with delight, he had always cherished the idea of supernatural existences, and found pleasure in doing so; he had always wished to believe that the soul of man, whilst on earth, is united by some mysterious link, with immaterial and invisible existences.

Such has been the secret aspirations of many a tutored and untutored mind, through the progress of ages: when the lights of religion were obscured, and darkness lay in barbarous times upon the souls of men, a faith in the connection of the soul, with supernatural powers and agen-

cies, betrayed the innate longing of mankind for communion with the divinity. All this the surgeon had made his study; he had sought with eager curiosity, to investigate the nervous system, and the secrets of magnetism, and though he did not give credit to all which enthusiasts and empirics pretended to disclose, he believed that great discoveries were destined to be made as to the nature and laws of human life and death, of volition, of sleep, and of human thought.

But he had no time to think of philosophy as he stood under the old stone wall. His feelings were too strongly excited for such speculations, and as he rapidly advanced he waved his light on all sides, though with little hope of again beholding the face, which, seen but for an instant, he felt half inclined to think might have been only a delusion of his own brain.

He called aloud, but no one answered him. He passed through the shed, and over the cabbage garden behind it, and across the field, but nothing was visible save the short grass beneath

his feet, and the stunted hedges; when he reached the road, he paused at length and looked back. A light appeared to emerge from the back door of the cottage, and after moving about round the shed became again invisible.

Vaughan, remembering all that had passed when he was in the cottage at Red Cliff, was now more than ever convinced that his unexpected arrival had that night disturbed some secret guest in Nanny's dwelling, and had the face he had seen been that of any living man, he would have no difficulty in understanding that the person who had escaped from the cottage to avoid him, was watching for his departure, in order to return to its shelter with safety.

But now, strange doubts disturbed his mind, and he reached home an hour before midnight without having come to any conclusion, except that some mystery was most decidedly going on at Nanny's cottage, and that whatever that might be, whether it concerned the living or the dead, that it was positively necessary to prevent Miss Saville returning thither.

Long he sat that night in his study poring over the works of many writers, who have treated of the immortality of the soul, but in spite of his own strong belief in the doctrine, he felt that all the authors of these voluminous folios, had yet known nothing of what they had written, except from Holy Writ. Belief is common, but knowledge is yet to come. But that it will come, that the mysteries of man's spiritual being will one day be as clearly understood as those of gravitation, attraction and electricity, was his firm persuasion; and with such thoughts he fell asleep, to dream that the spirit of a dead man had returned to earth, to divide him for ever from Miss Saville.

CHAPTER XI.

AT six o'clock, on the morning following Vaughan's visit to Nanny's cottage, the surgeon sprang from his bed after a troubled sleep. When he saw the sun shining in at his window, and heard the birds singing in the bushes near, he laughed at the superstitious fancies with which he had tormented himself on the previous evening. Like a man recovering his senses after a state of intoxication, he looked round on the fresh fair world, and wondered whence his previous perplexity had come.

But still, his cheerful humour made no alter-

ation in his plans. After a hasty breakfast, he went out early to visit his patients, in order to be at liberty, an hour or two before noon, to pay his promised visit to Miss Saville.

Emma was also an early riser, and when he at length found time to proceed towards her cottage, in crossing the churchyard, to his surprise and infinite delight, he met her in the sunny path, leading little Harry to his lesson at the Vicarage.

It was only natural, that they should stop and speak. Two beings who though they feared to acknowledge their feelings even to themselves, were already united by a secret harmony of soul, how could they pass each other by with careless indifference, when they had been longing to meet from the moment they last parted? And what pleasure could be more exquisite, or more pure, than theirs as they stood talking softly, yet gaily, and looking trustfully in each other's eyes, that fresh sweet morning, after the storm.

The birds were singing around them, in the branches of the old yew trees, yet glittering with

rain-drops; the grass was growing, and the daisies opening in the warmth of the sun, on all the turf-covered graves. Even in the churchyard death was clothed with life, till it was beautiful and every tiny leaf and flower seemed to whisper the word 'Resurgam,' to the devout and honest hearts of those, who trod the churchyard path with reverence and with love.

And honest was the love and profound the reverence, which filled the hearts both of Vaughan and Emma, as happy in each other's presence, they felt strengthened and refreshed by the beauty of that morning hour, and the peace which reigned within that consecrated ground.

Little Harry soon left them, and ran on to the Vicarage alone, and then Vaughan abruptly changing from more general topics, said that he had something, which he wished particularly to communicate to Miss Saville, without the presence of a third person, and that he trusted she would permit him to avail himself of that opportunity of disclosing it to her.

Emma led the way from the churchyard in

silence, after this address; nor did she speak, until seated in an old alcove in the Vicarage garden. Then with a friendly smile she desired Mr. Vaughan to tell her all he wished to communicate.

It was a pleasant place, for they were partly shaded from the sun, by the thick roses and jasmines, hanging down in fragrant masses from the moss grown roof, and waving lightly in the morning breeze.

"I brought you here," added Emma, "for it is my favourite resort in the day, and I must confess, there are many subjects on which I do not like to speak in the last resting-place of the dead."

"And yet," returned Vaughan, still standing before her, "what I wish to relate, has a strange harmony with that solemn place."

"You astonish me!" was the girl's short exclamation.

"You will wonder more, when you have heard my narrative," was the surgeon's reply; "but extraordinary as the circumstance may be, I

should not now recount it, did I not wish to warn you against returning to Nanny's cottage which Mr. Ashley, yesterday, so strongly objected to your visiting. Do you remember, Miss Saville, the conversation we recently had concerning the mystery of the soul," he added, abruptly changing the subject, and the expression of his countenance was solemn and sad, as he gazed intently on the soft sweet eyes of his companion.

"I have not forgotten it," she replied; "but what connexion can that possibly have with my going to Red Cliff?"

"Listen, and then judge," returned Vaughan, and in a quick, low voice he recounted to her, the whole occurrences of the preceding night. The changing expression of Emma's countenance sufficiently betrayed the deep interest she took in the narrative, although she did not speak till it was concluded, when she strongly expressed her astonishment.

"From what I myself heard and saw at the cottage," she added, "I cannot doubt that the

woman lodges some secret inmate under her roof."

"But it was no living tenant whom I beheld," rejoined the surgeon. "The form that I saw was that of the dead—of a man whose body I followed to the grave nearly six years ago."

As Vaughan pronounced these words, he was alarmed by the sudden palor of Emma's cheeks and lips, and the tremour which shook her whole frame.

"And do you, with your strong mind, Mr. Vaughan," she said, "believe it possible that the spirit of the departed can again appear on earth? Do you not deride the idea of a ghost, and mock at all the stories men relate of their return?"

"Who shall presume to pronounce what is impossible," answered the surgeon, in a low voice.

"You give me courage, if such be your opinion, to relate to you," returned Emma, "a secret, which I have hitherto foreborne to dis-

close, even to Mr. Ashley. The first evening you visited me, after Mr. Dillon's departure, about an hour before midnight, as I stood alone in my room, I too saw an apparition."

"You must have been deceived, Miss Saville," said the surgeon, who, though he was ready to indulge his own delusions, could reason clearly as to those of other people. "Your imagination, already excited by our conversation on this subject, gave your fancies a form of reality."

"Ah, do you talk thus, after what you have just related to me?" demanded the girl quickly.

"Yes," said Vaughan, "I must still doubt the incredible things I have not myself seen, for my profession teaches me that the body has its weaknesses, which act often forcibly on our perceptions. Men have seen forms, and have been haunted by visions, which medicine has had power to dispel."

Emma looked earnestly for a minute at the surgeon.

"You speak against your own conviction,"

she then said quietly. "I see it in every line of your countenance. I hear it in every tone of your voice. I am well. I am no seer of visions nor dreamer of dreams. Yet, as surely as I now see you, there bodily before me, I beheld that night, pressed close against the panes of my window, the father of little Harry, who was killed two years ago in a skirmish, in Upper India, by one of the Hill Tribes."

"Are you certain of his death?"

"It was officially reported, and I have myself spoken with an officer of his regiment, who assured me he had seen him killed at his side."

"The man I saw last night I followed myself to the grave," returned the surgeon solemnly; "and to this day I reproach myself as being in some measure accessory to his death, for I might in all probability have prevented it had I acted with promptitude. We had known each other from boys; he was well born, well educated, naturally kind and full of talent, but fickle, spoilt, careless, and fond of pleasure. He was led into vice and extravagance by one for whose

cunning he was no match, and he sunk so low that we quarrelled, as I intended, for ever; his misfortunes multiplied; they followed his vices like avenging furies. Unexpectedly I at length received a letter from him, informing me that he was involved in a distressing affair, of which a duel would be the consequence in a few days, and begging me to lay aside all resentment, and in remembrance of our ancient friendship, to join him with all speed, to act both as his second and his surgeon, in case of necessity. He intimated that all which he confided to me must be kept a profound secret, as on account of other difficulties he had already left England under a false name, and was in danger of arrest if discovered. I had gone to Brussels to be present at the wedding of a relative; the letter went first to England, and was forwarded to me there, so that I only received it the day before the marriage. The ingratitude I had formerly experienced from the wretched fugitive made me little inclined to start off at such a moment on a long journey, in compliance with his request;

and well aware of his usual instability, I could not help thinking that even if I did so, a reconciliation with his adversary might possibly be effected before my arrival at Ghent, whence his letter was written. I read this again after the wedding; it had no date, but from the post-mark I then first discovered that it had probably been sent eight days before; as no obstacle remained to impede my departure, I set off that very night for Ghent. Miss Saville, I arrived too late, the man whom I had once called friend was already nailed down in his coffin, and no duty remained for me to perform but to follow him to the grave. Had I not delayed my journey, even after the receipt of his letter, I might have arrived in time to prevent the duel, or to save his life. He had perished, I was told, in consequence of the want of a surgeon."

Mr. Vaughan was deeply agitated whilst he recounted this tragic story, and leaning over the little rustic table near which he sat, he covered his face with his hands as he ceased speaking, and remained silent, as if lost in thought.

"You have little cause to reproach yourself," said Emma, gently laying her hand on his arm, in deep compassion for the mental anguish he suffered; "you meant no evil, and if your judgment erred, it was only for want of knowledge."

"No, Miss Saville," returned the surgeon, "I am fully aware of my error. I allowed myself to be influenced by former feelings of resentment, and adopted a false necessity as an excuse for indulging them. You can now no longer wonder at the gloom I sometimes am unable to conceal, for remorse must be my companion to the grave. I saw the features of that man last night, wild and haggard, yet still too much resembling what he was, to be mistaken."

"You make me shudder," murmured the girl, in a low voice. "Two such apparitions of different persons, to appear nearly at the same time—it is fearful. But is there no possibility that the figure you saw, may be a living man, that your friend may have survived the duel, or some one bear a marked resemblance to him."

"I have asked myself all these questions," replied Vaughan, "but his death is too well attested to admit of doubt. His English servant was present when he died, and with me attended the funeral. What I saw was no resemblance, but the man himself, living or dead."

"I have the same persuasion," said Emma, "and if the occurrence is but a deception, it is most unaccountable, that two deceits of the same nature should be practised on two different persons at the same time."

"It is perfectly bewildering; I know not what to believe," was Vaughan's only rejoinder.

"What do you intend to do?" demanded Emma, whose former interest in her new friend was redoubled by the circumstances he had now confided to her.

"I can do nothing further at present," he said, "I must wait and watch; but I could not be tranquil till I had warned you not to return to Red Cliff till the mystery is cleared up. The woman may be honest, I can scarcely doubt it, but even if her house is not haunted, whilst she

receives male visitors whom she has cause to conceal, it can be no fit place for you to frequent alone. Pardon me if I presume to advise; I have no object but your welfare in so doing."

"I am deeply grateful," was the girl's reply, and she paused a minute in tremulous agitation before she added, "I too must wait and watch. Though I have spoken to no one but yourself of what I saw, and have endeavoured to put away the painful impression it left upon my mind, I confess to you that I am not without anxiety on the subject, even if the man be actually alive whose face I saw at my window."

"If you have adopted his child," returned Vaughan with timidity, for he feared he might be intruding too far on Miss Saville's confidence, "if you have for two years protected the boy as if he was your own son, you surely can have nothing to apprehend from little Harry's father, should he have survived his wounds."

Emma blushed deeply, but she made no reply. Vaughan saw and marked this with an uneasy

feeling. His curiosity was excited to know the real history of this man, and the nature of Emma's connexion with him. A suspicion again flashed across his mind as to the motive of the girl's visit to Nanny's cottage. But when he raised his eyes to her guileless, honest face, he instantaneously reproached himself for such a feeling.

"I sincerely beg your pardon, Miss Saville," he said earnestly, as if she had understood his secret thoughts.

"You have no reason to do so," she replied, with recovered composure; "I tell you frankly that I would rather meet a spirit from the dead, than have further communication with that man, if he still survives. I have acted like a mother to his child, for my own father's sake, who strictly enjoined me to do so, not for his. I have kept the boy until I love him dearly, and I should be sorry to have him taken from me by a worthless relative. But let me beg of you not to mention this subject to Mr. Ashley. I have been drawn on, I scarcely know how, to

“speak to you without reservation, but I must be more cautious to others.”

“Be assured, I neither misunderstand, nor will abuse your confidence,” was the surgeon’s reply.

Scarcely had he uttered these words, when they were startled by a loud scream from the further end of the garden.

It was the voice of little Harry, in extreme terror, calling for help. Both Vaughan and Emma instantly recognized it, and eagerly pronouncing the child’s name, the girl rushed with the speed of lightning in the direction whence it came. But the surgeon was before her, and when she reached a grass plot near the bottom of the enclosure, she saw him already engaged in a fierce struggle with a creature clothed as a woman, but evidently possessing the strength of a man. This person held little Harry with one arm, and endeavoured to keep off the surgeon with the other, whilst the boy, kicking and struggling with all his might, gave considerable assistance to his liberator. The contest was too

unequal to last long, and a few well-directed blows from Vaughan compelled the woman to release the boy and take to flight. Springing over the garden fence she ran full speed down the adjoining lane, towards the thick plantations which bounded the Cleve estate near the banks of the river.

Vaughan would have darted after the man, for such he evidently was, had he not been prevented by Harry clinging to him, crying bitterly till Emma came up, and she, at once perceiving his intent, seized him by the arm and implored him not to leave them. In fact, as she said, it was already too late to be of any avail, for the 'disguised ruffian, with long and rapid strides, had already got too far to be overtaken.

"It was a man, assuredly it was a man," she cried eagerly, whilst she held the sobbing child encircled in her arms, with his curly little head resting on her bosom. "Did you see his face?"

"It was nearly hidden by bandages," returned Vaughan, "and so disguised, that but for the

creature's strength and agility, I should have supposed it to have been a woman."

"It was no woman," returned Emma, fixing her eyes on those of her companion with an expression of terror, and the most solemn awe. "I feel no doubt that it was the same man that I saw at my window."

"Miss Saville!" returned the surgeon, with a smile of mild expostulation, "let not imagination deceive you. I received a blow from this fellow's fist, which suffices to convince me that he is perfectly substantial and material."

"And therefore, much more to be dreaded than any ghost," she said. "I knew him in an instant, through his disguise, his gait, his bearing, something which hangs around the individual, peculiar to himself which cannot be concealed; all these I recognized, and I am now convinced that the apparition at my window, was that of the living man, and that the story of his death must have been a falsehood."

"But what motive can he have for assuming

disguise, and acting with such violence as he has just done?"

"Motive!" cried Emma, sadly. "Many motives, which I have recently learnt, but which I cannot, and dare not explain."

"But if he is Harry's father, why does he not come forward and claim him from you, instead of resorting to such a strange and improper method of dividing you?"

"Who is my father?" cried the boy, looking suddenly up, though his eyes were still filled with tears. "I have no papa. Papa went away with the soldiers, and was killed, and laid in the church yard; and uncle Saville is gone there too. I won't be buried in the church yard; that old woman shan't take me to papa, though she said she would," and then the boy, clinging convulsively to Emma, began to cry more violently than before.

Vaughan and Emma exchanged glances. They had forgotten the child in the earnestness of their discourse, but both now understood that the sub-

ject must not be further discussed in his presence, and both endeavoured to soothe him by assurances, that he should never be taken from his aunt Saville.

“And that ugly old woman shan’t come back again,” he sobbed, in broken accents, but in spite of Emma’s promises and caresses, the little fellow remained in a state of great terror. “Don’t leave me,” he said, passing his arm round the girl’s neck. “Don’t go away, aunty. I can’t say any lessons to-day, tell grandpapa; and take me home, dear aunty. Grandpapa won’t scold, for he is gone away.”

“How came you to be in the garden, dearest?” demanded Emma tenderly.

“Grandpapa is gone out to see somebody that is ill,” said the child, “and so I was coming back to you, and the old woman wanted to give me some gingerbread, but I would not have it; she looked so ugly I did not like her. So then she seized me up in her arms, and I began to cry out for you. Oh! aunty, how glad I am

you heard me. Don't let that old woman come back to take me to papa. I want to stay with you, aunty."

"He must go home and be kept quiet," said Vaughan, after feeling the boy's pulse; "you must allow me to carry him, for he is too heavy a burden for you, and cannot walk."

After much persuasion, little Harry unclasped his fast embrace, round Emma's neck, and allowed the surgeon to take him in his arms, but as they approached the church-yard, his terror became so great, that it was thought better to take a longer road, in order to avoid crossing it.

They went therefore, about a hundred paces down the lane, by which the man had escaped, and then turned to cross a meadow, from which a path led up to Emma's cottage. They had not proceeded far in the field, when Vaughan was accosted by a gentleman, who came in a contrary direction.

He was a little shrivelled old man, with an aquiline nose, and a low and narrow, but remark-

ably prominent forehead. His complexion was transparent and pink, and his face was without whiskers; but his flaxen hair was brushed with great care, to supply the deficiency, and a pair of light bushy eyebrows, hung over his sharp, restless blue eyes, which were slightly turned outward, as if like those of a hare, they were intended to look all ways at once. Two large upper teeth projected over his under lip, so that he was unable to close his mouth without leaving the ends of them exposed. His dress was exceedingly neat, and it was evident, that he paid great attention to his personal appearance, and his manner had that little restless servility, which betrays a weak and vain man.

Mr. Ned Cranbourne was a distant relative, and very humble companion of Emma's uncle, Sir Charles Saville, with whom he had long resided, and Vaughan, who knew him well, was greatly annoyed at being thus interrupted.

Emma passed on, but Mr. Cranbourne stood so directly in the path, that Vaughan was un-

able to follow her, till he found himself positively held fast by the button.

“ Ah, my good friend, I have caught you at last,” said the little man, who had made him captive, and he laughed till his great teeth seemed the largest part of his face; “ I find you in charming company. A lovely girl, upon my word, but I won’t blab,” and he laid his finger on his long nose, “ though a certain lady, I know, would be very jealous, no doubt! and a child too! quite charming, upon my word, to have a family already provided. But where are you going? what are you doing here, instead of visiting your patients? Eh, my dear sir? making love, I suppose; but it’s not a profitable pursuit—better make hay whilst the sun shines,” and the little fellow laughed, till Vaughan felt nearly tempted to knock him down.

But the surgeon saw, that Emma was happily out of hearing, and answering Mr. Cranbourne as civilly as he could, he again attempted to escape from him.

"Won't detain you an instant," said the little man eagerly. "I only want to ask you, if you heard that we arrived a day sooner than we intended, at Cleve. All there last night, but Brussella was devilish dull, so we set off for England at once. There is nothing like home, my dear fellow, particularly such a home as Cleve! We found Mrs. and Miss Dillon had arrived before us, and were upsetting everything. A charming woman, that Miss Dillon, a terrible woman, in my humble opinion! always in search of excitement—but has a shrewd eye to business though—the main chance! you understand me, knows her man, oh, Vaughan," and though the surgeon was uncertain, whether Mr. Cranbourne looked in his face, or was watching Emma in the distance, he saw that he meant to give a very expressive glance.

"I beg your pardon," said his prisoner, gladly availing himself of this momentary pause, "but I must leave you. This little boy is ill, and must be taken home."

"Aye, ill indeed, a very odd place to have a

sick child," cried Ned; "who is he? and the lady? never saw her in this neighbourhood before, she is his mother I suppose? who can she be?"

"A stranger," answered Vaughan.

"Oh, you need not tell me that; I saw it at a glance. Nothing of that style belongs to this savage neighbourhood. Lucky fellow, Vaughan, you must tell me all about it some other time. I can keep a secret; but let me tell you it is rather dangerous dealing in smuggled goods."

When Ned Cranbourne had whispered the last words, as nearly as his little person permitted him, into Mr. Vaughan's ear, he released his hold of his button, and let him pass on.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Saville," said the surgeon, when he again overtook her; "but that man is incorrigible."

"Who is he?" inquired Emma.

"Your own distant cousin," was the reply. "You must surely have heard of Ned Cranbourne, the poor sycophant, and dependent of Sir Charles Saville?"

"Yes, my father has often spoken of him as

an inquisitive, tattling, meddlesome little man, who made much mischief between him and his brother."

"I have no doubt of it," returned Vaughan, "and I believe he was also a principal agent in the misfortunes of your cousin, Captain Saville. Yet I believe he has no bad intentions. He is not malicious, only an inquisitive tale-bearer, a much more dangerous variety of the human species than men usually believe. The greatest results are often produced by insignificant instruments, and such men can do much evil by their folly and their idleness."

"How can my uncle tolerate such a companion?" demanded Emma, who was now walking at Vaughan's side, holding little Harry's hand in hers.

The surgeon turned, and looked into her honest, and, as he thought, angelic eyes, with an expression of tenderness and respect.

"All men are not so difficult in their choice of society as you are, Miss Saville," he said. "Cranbourne can flatter; he is cunning, and

possesses certain faculties, and is more a vain and lazy syberite, than a fool. He likes your uncle's table, he likes to belong to a great house, and has a sort of canine fidelity to the baronet. He has an ass's hide, and supports kicks with tranquillity, and fawns and flatters in return for contempt. Spoilt great men, like your uncle, delight in being flattered, even by the slaves they despise, but who frequently despise them in secret."

"I always understood that my uncle was a very proud man," said Emma, with some embarrassment.

"You do not know him then?" demanded the surgeon.

"I have seen him when a child, but never since then," was the girl's reply. "My father always spoke of him as a man of the world, highly accomplished, and greatly admired in society."

"Fifteen years make a great change in a man of fashion, no doubt, after he is past fifty," said Vaughan. "Twenty thousand a year also, when

a man is a widower without children, seldom improves his character as he grows older, particularly when united to a title. You can have no idea how these advantages deify him in English society, for men have agreed in England to fall down and worship gold and nobility. Before these two things they are content to become abject sycophants, and fancy themselves ennobled by being in the same room with the veriest fool or scoundrel who possesses either. Yet we talk about liberty, and civilization, and progress, whilst the common mind is blind to all the noblest gifts of the Almighty, and the multitude are willingly the slaves of gold. But, thank Heaven! there are pleasures which they can neither understand nor enjoy. May I carry Harry into the house?" he asked, as he reached Miss Saville's cottage. "He seems inclined to sleep, and is no doubt exhausted. With your permission, I will at once carry him up to bed."

Emma thanked him, and when the servant had given them admission, she led the way up to the boy's sleeping room, where, after Vaughan

retired, she laid him comfortably to rest. When the surgeon again returned, to ascertain what further assistance the child might require, Emma was deeply grateful, and thanked him warmly for all he had done to assist her.

She felt indeed most deeply the dependence of woman upon man, and the misfortune it was for a female to be compelled to struggle through the difficulties and trials of life without being supported by the strength and energy of a male companion. But Vaughan's assistance made her rejoice in her dependence. When she submitted to man's will, when she was guided by man's counsel, when she depended for her happiness on man's affection, she felt she was fulfilling the purposes of her existence, and living in harmony with her own nature. She had always pitied those strong minded women, who, unloving and unloved, or proudly emulous of fame, disputed man's supremacy, and waged a useless and vain combat with the natural and social laws. She wanted no wider field for activity than her duties afforded her, and the labours of love suf-

ficed to content her ambition. She might have done all that Vaughan then did for her, but to be served and assisted by him, afforded her inexpressible pleasure, for though she scarcely dared to acknowledge it to herself, she felt that his service was the service of affection.

The whole manner of Vaughan, whilst he attended her little ward, proved that her happiness was not indifferent to him. But as her thoughts were pure, so was her manner modest, yet unembarrassed, in the new position in which chance had placed them.

The nerves of the boy had received a severe shock from fright, and he remained in an almost insensible state for some time after he was laid on the bed. Yet Emma was assured by the surgeon that there was no danger, if the little fellow could be kept quiet during the remainder of the day.

He then offered to go and inform Mr. Ashley of what had happened, and to beg him not to disturb the little patient by coming to the cottage.

Vaughan spoke gentle and considerate words to Emma at parting, and she repeated them often to herself as she sat working at Harry's bedside for many hours after his departure. Sometimes the remembrance of Dillon and his warnings flashed across her mind, but they caused her no uneasiness. She could only wonder at his motives for slander so false and virulent, and she rejoiced that circumstances so unforeseen had made her more intimate with the surgeon in a few hours than she could have been in the great masquerade of society after an acquaintance of many months. A bond had been knit that day between them on which their future destiny would, in all probability, depend.

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT little Harry had recounted to Emma was perfectly true. At an early hour that morning Mr. Ashley had been unexpectedly summoned to attend the death bed of one of his parishioners, and was detained there till noon in the performance of his solemn duties. He had told his old housekeeper to amuse little Harry till he returned, and looked forward with pleasure to their usual lessons.

No one who had met the venerable man walking leisurely across the fields, smoking a pipe, as he strolled along, with one hand in the

pocket of his old velvet jacket, and with the other carrying a fishing basket, in which he had taken food and wine to the cottage of the sick, would have supposed that he was a man once famous in his college for refinement and elegance, and still remarkable for the wonderful cultivation of his poetical and elevated mind. His garb would have blinded all ordinary observers to his merit.

Yet the poor sufferer, whom Mr. Ashley had devoted that morning to console, had listened to his voice as to that of a messenger from heaven, and the loving charity with which he was ever ready to administer to the wants of the needy, seemed to prove that his mission was indeed from above. If the great had despised and cast him off, he found full exercise for his duties amongst the poor, who though unable to appreciate his talents and acquirements, could fully estimate his goodness, and derive comfort from his works of love.

Though he smoked his pipe in a somewhat unclerical manner, yet his mind during his walk

was occupied by holy thoughts, and his consciousness of having performed his duty, was almost happiness; for though he had been in the presence of death, he knew that by his tender care, that death had been deprived of its sting.

He was surprised when he reached his garden that little Harry did not run out as usual to welcome him, and he was somewhat displeased, when his servant told him that the boy, after playing awhile in the garden, had, she believed, gone home, as she had seen nothing of him since.

No feeling of alarm crossed the Vicar's mind at this intelligence, though he was disappointed by the absence of his little favourite. As he mounted the stairs to his study, his housekeeper put a letter into his hand. She said it had been sent very early that morning, and about an hour afterwards, a boy had called for an answer. He had returned twice within a very short time, and seemed much disappointed to hear that Mr. Ashley was still from home, as he had been charged, he said, to bring an answer directly.

The Vicar received the letter carelessly, for he was accustomed to receive many epistles from his parishioners, of which he took but little account.

He seated himself in his easy chair; he placed his spectacles on his nose, and then first glanced at the direction of the epistle he held in his hand.

He actually started with amazement when he saw the writing,. He tore open the cover, and the astonishment, the mingled joy and terror, of the old man, as he perused its contents, surpassed description. The letter had been written the night before, and contained threats of a most alarming nature, were its warnings neglected, yet hours had elapsed since its delivery at the Vicarage, without his having been able to take any steps to avert the menaced evil.

For a while the old man sat, as if stunned, and unable to comprehend the extraordinary disclosures he had just perused. But he had little time for reflection, before he was startled by the sound of a man's footsteps ascending the stairs.

It was evident that some one had entered the house unannounced, and was approaching his study.

Almost unconscious of what he was doing, the Vicar hastily thrust the letter under a book upon his table, almost at the same moment that his door was thrown open, and a visitor walked into the room.

When Mr. Vaughan entered the Vicar's study about half an hour afterwards, he was astonished to find that Mr. Ashley was not alone. Mr. Ned Cranbourne was reclining in a state of perfect enjoyment, in the only easy chair the room contained.

He was too great a man, in the absence of his commander, Sir Charles Saville, to think of disturbing himself for the village surgeon, and coolly nodded to Vaughan, whom the vicar received with a cordiality, which the sycophant considered thrown away on a man of so low a class.

"Can you tell me anything of little Harry?" were the first words Mr. Ashley addressed to his visitor.

"I have come expressly to explain his absence," was the reply.

"Has any accident happened to him?"

"Nothing serious; he has been somewhat frightened, but a night's rest will, I hope, make all right again."

"I am delighted to hear you say so," cried Mr. Ashley, "our friend Cranbourne, has terribly alarmed me, by relating that he met you with a dead child in your arms, after having heard the most alarming screams from my garden."

"Yes, awful screams," said Cranbourne, eagerly interposing. "I could get no explanation from Mr. Vaughan, but I saw a good deal. Whilst the noise continued, I stood concealed behind the stump of a tree, for I have no wish to be shot down, like an Irish landlord, by a man in petticoats, and I declare to you on the honour of a gentleman, that I never saw a more cut-throat old hussy in my life, than an old woman, who soon afterwards leapt over your garden fence, and ran down the back lane, as nimbly as a smuggler."

was amazed on looking up to perceive that no one was listening to him, except himself. The Vicar seized the opportunity afforded by this sudden pause, to make a hurried apology for leaving him a few minutes alone, and immediately afterwards left the room with Vaughan.

Mr. Ned was at first exceedingly nettled. Though accustomed to be slighted by his superiors, he fancied himself privileged to be treated with respect, by those whom he considered beneath him, as the Vicar and the surgeon; but not naturally of an irascible temper, he soon regained his usual placidity. His next thought was to turn his position to the best advantage. He peered with his restless eyes, into every corner of the room; they seemed to bore through the very doors of the old presses around it, so eager was his curiosity to ascertain their contents. There was a glass closet, and piles of papers lay neatly tied up within it, which he would have given the contents of his purse to peruse, but when he gently tried the door, he found it fast locked.

As he returned to his chair, he observed with unspeakable delight, that close behind him was a writing table, to which he had hitherto turned his back. A few scattered papers lay upon it, and after cautiously looking round, to make certain that he was not observed, nor liable to interruption, he without any scruple of conscience took up the one nearest to him, and began to peruse it. It was only a butcher's bill, for the last week, but though the information it contained was too small to be retailed to Sir Charles Saville, it afforded Mr. Cranbourne a personal satisfaction, to ascertain, from so authentic a document, the exact amount of Mr. Ashley's expenses. Yet he was in no way interested in the Vicar's disbursements; only his little restless mind, for lack of better food, preyed commonly on garbage.

Replacing this paper exactly where he had found it, he proceeded in his unlawful studies. Much he was edified by a farmer's letter about tithe, most vilely written, and more vilely spelt, yet proving the writer to be possessed of an

began with hasty anxiety to look for the very letter which had been abstracted. Though surprised that he did not find it where he believed that he had left it, this gave him no uneasiness, for he never supposed that it could be lost, and aware that he was at times extraordinarily absent, he did not search further for it; not doubting that he had unconsciously deposited it in a place of safety, where, when least expected, it would again come to light. Its contents were too strongly engraven on his memory for its recovery to be then of immediate importance.

The afternoon was far advanced, and the circumstances which Vaughan had communicated to him with regard to little Harry, made him impatient to see the boy, and the lost letter had excited such hopes of unexpected happiness in his heart, that he restrained himself with great difficulty from going at once to Emma's cottage.

But what his will could scarcely have commanded, was rendered inevitable by business, and the Vicar was detained by unavoidable engage-

ments at his house till a late hour in the evening.

But no sooner did he find himself at liberty, than he set off eagerly to Miss Saville's, where he hoped to hear the confirmation of tidings, on which the future happiness of his life, he fondly believed, would depend.

It had been an anxious day to poor Emma herself. In spite of Vaughan's assurances that Harry would speedily recover from the effects of his fright, she could not watch the feverish and disturbed sleep of the boy without apprehension. She was at the same time scarcely less alarmed than Harry had been, when she recollected the circumstances of the morning.

She no longer doubted that the child's father was still alive, and the strange method he had taken to obtain possession of his son, proved that his character had not changed since she had last seen him in India. His passionate professions of love for her, in defiance of her declared indifference, had made her, even then, regard him with terror, which the subsequent discovery

If the boy's father had escaped the battle field, where he was said to have perished, her task was likely to be one of much greater difficulty than she had at first anticipated, but, though much alarmed, she endeavoured, with quiet moral courage, to consider what line of conduct it would be most prudent for her to pursue. Had her relations with Mr. Vaughan been more intimate, she would gladly have turned to him for advice and support, but that was now impossible. There was, in fact, only one person to whom her father had left her free to communicate the secret of little Harry's birth, in case she ever stood in need of assistance.

She knew there were reasons to prevent the father asserting openly his legal claims to his son, and it seemed therefore probable, that though the attempt to carry him off that morning had been happily frustrated, it would be renewed in some other manner.

The utmost vigilance would be necessary to prevent the loss of her little ward; and as the twilight deepened that evening, Emma felt for

the first time with terror her lone and unprotected position.

At an early hour, she assisted her maid to secure all the doors and windows in the best manner they were able, and then sending the girl to rest, she resolved to sit by the boy's bedside until the dawn of day, when the servant would replace her watch.

The sun had set, and night was rapidly approaching, when she was startled by some one knocking at the front door for admission. She sprang to a window and looked out, when she was hailed by the welcome voice of Mr. Ashley.

In a minute she was down stairs, and joyfully admitted the Vicar. With many expressions of welcome she led him into the parlour, after she had shown him little Harry sleeping in his little bed upstairs.

When she had closed the door and set down the light she carried, she was for the first time struck by the extraordinary expression of the old man's countenance, which betrayed the

greatest agitation; but whether of joy, or of sorrow, it would have been impossible to decide.

"My dear Miss Saville," he said, eagerly grasping both her hands, "you must sympathize with me in a great joy—a joy I have no words to express! but bear with me. I shall be calmer soon! bear with me, even though I shed tears. My daughter's child is found; my grandson is restored to me, and that grandson is little Harry. Our own precious, dear little Harry! Oh, Miss Saville, well may we say that the ways of Heaven are inscrutable. That dear boy is my own Lucy's child. I loved him by instinct the first time I beheld him, though he is the very image of his father."

"Thank Heaven, that you know all!" returned Emma, heaving a deep sigh, as if her heart was relieved from an almost insupportable burthen. "I have greatly need of better protection than I am able to give him."

"I intend to pass the night here," answered Mr. Ashley, "whether you give me permission or not."

"I am delighted to hear it," was Emma's reply. "Though you may know much, I have strange things to recount to you, and it was my father's strict injunction that I should only confide my secrets about the boy to you."

"Emma," returned the old man, laying his withered hand upon her arm, "you might have confided in me sooner, instead of leaving me to hear the story from another. But I now know all. I know that the worthless husband, who brought my only child with sorrow to the grave, who robbed me of her infant a month after its birth, who, ruined and dishonoured, pretended death in order to escape disgrace; that the outlawed son of Sir Charles Saville has returned to rob me of the little angel who had brought a ray of sunshine to brighten the darkness of my old age. Oh, Miss Saville, in my foolishness I talked of joy, but mine is a cruel destiny." Tears filled the Vicar's eyes as he ceased speaking, and with hurried and agitated steps he paced the little room.

"I rejoice that you know everything," was the girl's only reply.

"Yea, I know it now," said Mr. Ashley, "but you should have told me sooner, Emma. Why should you so long have concealed from me that the boy I loved, as if by instinct, was my own grandchild, was my Lucy's son?"

"I had promised to my father to keep the secret of the boy's birth as long as possible, even from you," answered the girl; "but I brought him to you, and meant to disclose his relationship to you whenever he had need of your assistance."

"I have learnt it now from another," replied Mr. Ashley, "nor has joy come unaccompanied by anxiety. This morning I had a letter from Captain Saville, demanding the restoration of his son, and threatening, in case of refusal, to get possession of him a second time by force or fraud. Owing to my absence from home he received no answer, and had put his menaces in execution before my return."

"To Mr. Vaughan alone are we indebted for

the rescue of little Harry," returned Miss Saville. "I sent the boy to you as usual, and the servant, to amuse him till your return, allowed him to go and gather strawberries at the bottom of the garden. His screams first made me aware of his danger."

"And the surgeon was with you?" demanded the Vicar, with some surprise.

"We had met him in the churchyard," replied Emma, blushing deeply.

"This first attempt has failed," rejoined Mr. Ashley, without appearing to notice her confusion, "but Frank Saville is not easily dismayed. His former conduct renders it impossible, that he can legally claim his child. He will not, therefore, desist from his efforts to carry him off, and as Harry's grandfather, my dear Miss Saville, I shall be compelled to take him under my protection. A single woman, even with your courage and resolution, is utterly incapable of protecting him, and the attempt to do so longer, would only expose you to needless difficulties and persecutions. As soon as he

can bear removal he must be brought to the Vicarage."

"He has been attacked there once," returned the girl, with impetuous emotion.

"Yes," rejoined the Vicar, "but at that time, I had no suspicion of evil. Now, it is different. But I advise you, strictly to guard the secret of his birth especially from Sir Charles Saville, for there are persons about him, who were the bitter enemies of his son, and would prove no doubt the persecutors of his grandchild. Nor is it less important for the boy's welfare, to save him from the evil training of his own parent."

"All this my father felt," said Emma, "and for these reasons alone, enjoined me to educate him, without revealing his birth till he was able to assert his own rights, and capable of defending them."

"It is evident that Captain Saville has no intention of making his existence known to his family," returned Mr. Ashley; "it is therefore, not impossible, that when he is convinced that he has nothing to fear from us, and that we

only desire the boy's welfare, he may give up his mad attempts to carry him off, and be content to leave him under my care, if permitted to visit him secretly from time to time."

"And must I give up my only little companion!" was the girl's mournful exclamation.

"Your reputation would be ruined, if Saville came to your house to see the child," returned the Vicar in a quiet, impressive tone. "The letter of this man, and your evidence, leave me no doubt that Harry is my daughter's child; after his father I am then his nearest protector, and as the little fellow cannot be removed to my house to-night, I consider it my duty to pass the night here!"

"But, my dear sir, you are often absent from your home," persisted Emma.

"He shall be properly guarded, if I find it needful. But surely I heard a strange noise—there are heavy steps. Is there anyone sleeping up-stairs, besides Harry?"

"There again!" cried the girl, starting from her seat, as a door closed with a loud noise,

in the room above them, and then some one walked hastily across the chamber.

Neither Miss Saville nor the Vicar spoke again, but each seizing a lighted candle from the table, they ran with breathless speed to the upper story.

CHAPTER XIII.

THERE is no quality more admirable, or so little estimated, as presence of mind. The quiet, moral courage, thus designated, is indeed an admirable gift, whether in the great general or the humble individual, who in the ordinary business of life, is ready to act with judicious promptitude, in the most sudden and unforeseen emergencies.

With this Emma was eminently endowed, and totally devoid of terror on her own account, she hurried on before the Vicar to the chamber of little Harry, and so rapid and noiseless were her steps, that she had seized the arm of a man, who was in the act of lifting the sleep-

ing boy from the bed, before he was aware of her approach, or suspected that any one in the house was astir.

“For mercy’s sake, don’t terrify the child again,” she said, in a hurried whisper, “he has been ill, very ill since the fright you gave him this morning, and if you rouse him abruptly from his sleep in this manner, his fever will return with increased violence.”

Miss Saville still held the man’s arm when she had ceased speaking; she still continued to gaze, with fixed and earnest eyes, upon his wild, sun-burnt, and care worn face, with quiet courage, though her hands trembled, and her limbs shook beneath her.

“He is my own son!” he said, in the same low tone, without turning his head towards her, though he at once desisted from the purpose she had interrupted.

As Captain Saville stood upright at the bedside, his tall athletic figure was drawn up to its full height, and the common garments of a sailor which he then wore, displayed it to the utmost

advantage. His face, though he had not arrived at the middle age, was furrowed by care, but he was still handsome, and the black hair which curled from beneath his round straw hat, his thin straight nose, his large black eyes and sunburnt skin, gave him more the appearance of an Italian than of an Englishman. The very wildness of his aspect, and the eager restlessness of his glittering eyes had charms for many, but Emma knew the capricious and passionate character of her cousin too well not to recoil from him with fear, even whilst she dared his anger in defence of the helpless boy she had promised to protect.

"He is my own son," was the only reply he deigned to make to her repeated remonstrances.

"I know it," she returned, with increased firmness, when she saw Mr. Ashley enter the room. "Yet for two years you have deserted him, and imposing on the world by a story of your death, have left him to the care of others; for two years my father and I have reared and loved him as our own child, and surely, if no

gratitude is our due, I have at least not deserved to be requited by insult, or to have the privacy of my house violated by your making a secret and forcible entry in the dead of the night, to carry away by stealth, the boy whom you gave openly to my care. Yet I have learnt from my father since we parted that we are relatives, and surely we were once friends."

"Relatives and friends," echoed Saville, with a low laugh of disdain, "those are words which convey no meaning to my ears, but that of enemies and persecutors. Friends and relatives! fiends that wear a mask, the better to ruin and destroy. I have done with all such."

"My father, Major Saville, was never your enemy," answered the girl, who at the same time made a sign to Mr. Ashley not yet to interfere. "You trusted him with the secret of your name and history, and he assisted you by every means in his power."

"He too had suffered from his relatives," returned Saville in a quieter tone. "He was the victim of oppression he had vainly resisted, and

could feel for me; but you, Emma, what have you ever done that should make any distinction between you and my worst enemies? Have you not repelled my addresses? Have you not rejected my hand and refused even to listen to the expression of my devoted, my passionate attachment, the truest and most ardent which man ever felt? With scorn and evident aversion you were inexorable even to my despair, and the last words I heard from your lips were those of hate instead of pity."

"Your own violence made you mistake my feelings," said the girl firmly; "and surely, though I could not return your love, there is a wide difference between the enmity you accuse me of, and the manner in which I have always treated you and your child. You may have been offended with me, but I have given you no just cause for resentment."

"Emma, you drove me mad," was Saville's abrupt reply. "I have incurred much danger in returning to England, and yet by Heaven! if I must speak the truth, I came less to claim my

boy than with the hope of once more meeting you, and finding you perhaps less hardened against me than when in India."

"Whatever motives have influenced your conduct," said Mr. Ashley, now interposing, "let me implore you to be prudent. Give the Dillons no advantage over you, and with patience all may yet go well. No one here is aware of the boy's relationship to you, except ourselves, and if we are unwilling to yield up Harry to you, it is solely because we believe that we can give him a better education than you can possibly do, in your present unsettled position. I am his grandfather, and though I once had bitter cause of enmity against you, time and charity have subdued the feeling; you owe me, however, some reparation for the past, and the boy can best supply to me the loss of the dead."

"I have scarcely deserved this of you, Mr. Ashley," said Saville, his voice trembling with sudden emotion.

The Vicar held out his hand, and his son-in-law grasped it in silence.

"I have proposed to your cousin," said the old man kindly, "to take Harry to the Vicarage and to rear him as my own child. There, forgetting all offences, you shall be free to visit him whenever you desire it; and if absent from England, can receive constant tidings of him. You may be assured that he shall be trained to be worthy of the wealth and rank which may one day descend to him."

"Wealth and rank!" repeated Saville, with a scornful laugh. "You speak fairly, I allow," he added, turning away from the bed, without taking any further notice of the boy, who, half aroused, was moving uneasily on his pillow; "it is possible that I have erred in believing that you and Miss Saville were in league with my enemies, and that I have acted unwisely in consequence; I was too hasty perhaps, in supposing that you desired to divide me for ever from my child."

"I am his mother's father," said the Vicar, "and least likely of all men to abet the intrigues of those who covet your birthright and his. I owe them little love, and the interests of my grandchild are as my own."

"There is some truth in what you say, Mr. Ashley," exclaimed Saville, after standing for a few moments lost in thought. "I will accept your offer of educating my boy, for the present, and leave you free to take him to the Vicarage for one month. If at the expiration of that term I can visit him without danger, I will do so, but you are no doubt aware, that I cannot walk about by day like other men. Miss Saville, even if she loves him as she professes, must be content, with this arrangement; but whether or not he remains near her above the stipulated time, depends not on me, but on herself."

"I am ready to make any sacrifice in my power, for little Harry's advantage," returned Emma, as she fondly soothed the little fellow again to sleep.

"Any sacrifice! that remains to be proved," answered Captain Saville, in a voice, which deep and stern, was tremulous from emotion; and the girl shrunk with her old feeling of terror, from the wild and passionate glances, by which the words were accompanied. "One thing," he continued, "I have now to require, and that is, that

all which has passed here this night, may be buried for ever in oblivion. You must both give me a solemn promise to that effect, and also that you will let no man know that I am still alive, or have returned to England. The report of my death has been circulated by my desire, with much pains, for I judged it the only way to elude the persecution of my enemies; and as long as my father lives, I fear I must be content to have it generally believed that I sleep in a foreign grave."

Emma held out her hand to her cousin, as a token of good faith, but he pretended not to notice it. She then said with deep solemnity:

"I give you my sacred word, that I will reveal your secrets to no man, without your own permission."

"And I engage," added Mr. Ashley, "that as long as you keep your good faith with me, so long will I be silent."

"I am content," said Saville. "And now, my fair cousin," he added, "though I entered uninvited by your staircase window, I shall be

glad to make my exit in a more convenient manner. Will you have the goodness to light me to the front door?"

So saying, Captain Saville slightly touched his hat to Mr. Ashley, and, followed by Emma, quickly descended the stairs. He did not speak whilst he assisted her to unbolt and unlock the door, but when she had partly opened it, and expected that he would instantly depart, he turned suddenly upon her, and seized her hand in his.

"Emma," he said, "we must have further discourse together. We must meet once more, and alone. No third person must stand by and listen to that which concerns us only. Remember, the boy's fate, as well as mine and your own, will depend upon the answer you may give me. Before the month has past, we shall meet again."


So saying, without further greeting or salutation, he suddenly released her hand, pushed the door wide open, and went out into the gloomy night.

As Captain Saville descended the steps he

almost touched another man, who, with a lantern in his hand, was slowly ascending them.

Emma saw them thus close together, and her heart grew cold with despair, for she knew by the expression of Vaughan's countenance, that he had recognized her nocturnal visitor. She instantly conjectured that the man whose fancied apparition the surgeon had beheld at Nanny's cottage, and her cousin, Frank Saville, must be one and the same person, and she dreaded that, from the proximity of Vaughan to the open door, he must have heard the last words addressed to her; words of most doubtful meaning, but which it was totally out of her power to explain.

Though perfectly innocent, even of an evil thought, she trembled as if agitated by the consciousness of guilt, as the surgeon stood motionless before her. He did not speak, but the expression of his countenance inflicted on her a keener pang than the bitterest reproaches could have done. It sufficed to betray that the deepest and saddest despair which can afflict a good man, was at his heart, the despair of the



existence of human virtue. His trust in female honesty and in female innocence he believed was for ever destroyed. Two minutes previously he had thought of Emma Saville as a creature almost too perfect for him to aspire to; pure, true, faithful in affection, and honest in every thought and deed. But an instant had sufficed to destroy all his confidence in her perfection. He had seen her giving egress at midnight from her solitary dwelling to the very man of whose existence she had recently professed the most entire ignorance. He had seen her listen, with her hand in his, to this man's passionate assignation, though only a few hours previously the gentle encouragement of her manner had made him fondly believe that he was the first who had ever excited a feeling of love in her heart.

If any one had recounted to him what he then witnessed he would have refused with indignation to credit the tale, but he had now no room for doubt.

Observing, at length, that Emma stood silently at the door, as if expecting him to enter, Vaug-

han endeavoured to master the feelings which made the blood rush stifling to his heart, so as almost to deprive him of the power of utterance. He attempted to address her, but his voice faltered, and he was obliged to lean against the door-post for support.

If Emma had previously any doubt of his affection for her, she felt as she then gazed at him that such doubts were at an end; and yet she knew, with the keenest agony, that the love of that man, the only love she had ever desired to possess, was probably from that moment for ever lost to her.

One word of explanation would have solved the whole mystery, and restored their mutual confidence and happiness; but that word the poor girl had recently given a solemn pledge that she would never utter, and rather than fail in her truth, she must submit to the loss, not only of Vaughan's affection, but of his respect. She must submit to be the object of the most degrading suspicions, on the part of the man she loved; and for the faults and imprudence of a cousin, whom the world severely blamed, she was immo-

cently to submit in silence to be unjustly disgraced, and covered with shame.

Great as was the trial, there was no alternative. Suddenly she remembered that the presence of Mr. Ashley in her cottage, might in some way exonerate her from blame, and she took courage to address Vaughan.

"Will you come in?" she said, "the Vicar is up stairs with little Harry, if you will be kind enough to see him."

The surgeon looked at her fair, pale, and agitated, yet still beautiful face, and he felt convinced that she had now uttered, as she had previously acted, a lie. He was about to turn away in silent disgust, but his heart softened when he saw that Emma's eyes were full of tears.

"I had no wish to intrude my company unnecessarily upon you, at such an hour," he said, in a sad and grave voice, "but as I returned from visiting a sick patient, I saw a light at your window, and fearing that the boy might be worse, I stopped at the door to inquire for him."

"He is better, thank you," replied Emma, with trembling lips, and hardly knowing what

she said, "Mr. Ashley is with him, but we did not sit up on his account."

"I am aware of that," the surgeon coldly returned, "though I presume I should scarcely have heard of the dead man's resuscitation, had I not chanced myself to meet him at your door. You keep strange company, and at strange hours, Miss Saville; but I confess it is no business of mine to criticise your conduct, so I wish you a very good night."

Slightly touching his hat, with the most distant civility, Vaughan then turned away. Emma stood eagerly looking after him into the night, as he passed down the hollow road towards the village, and it appeared to her excited imagination, as if every step he trod on the hard gravel sent forth a sound which was the knell to all her youthful hopes of happiness. When she could hear it no more, she hid her face in her hands and wept.

Bitter, very bitter, were the tears she shed, more bitter because she knew that she unjustly suffered!

When she again closed the door for the night, she had scarce power to draw the bolts. A great change had passed over her, and she felt as if the strength of her brave spirit, which had supported her through so many trials, had at length utterly deserted her.

She met Mr. Ashley at the foot of the stairs, and returned with him to the parlour, where they had been previously sitting, and when the old man saw her in the light of the candle he carried, he was greatly shocked at the sudden alteration in her appearance.

She had not the courage to tell him that Mr. Vaughan had been there, nor to relate what had passed between them. Glad to escape from Mr. Ashley's scrutiny, and his questions, she soon yielded to his desire and retired to her own bedroom, leaving the good man, in spite of all her remonstrances, to pass the night, in her little parlour.

END OF VOL I.

